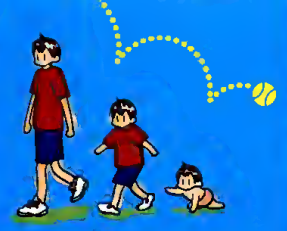

主人公（エーちゃん）が、
着々と強くなっていくサマに
ちょっと感応。

勝木 光

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

勝木 光

9

Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

KCM4185

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Baby Steps 9

勝木 光

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SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

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2009 9 KC MAGAZINE

# Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

9

勝木光

# FL TENNIS ACADEMY in Florida

PRODUCED A BUNCH OF PLAYERS WHO BECAME NO.1 IN THE WORLD. MANY ACTIVE PROS ARE ALSO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMY. AN IDEAL ENVIRONMENT THAT HAS EVERYTHING THAT'S NEEDED FOR TENNIS.

## IKE SOUJI

PROFESSIONAL PLAYER WHO'S THE SAME AGE AS EI-CHAN. HE MOVED HIS BATTLEGROUND TO AMERICA, AND IS CURRENTLY A MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY EI-CHAN WENT FOR STUDY ABROAD. NACCHAN'S CHILDHOOD FRIEND, AND THE ONE WHO INSPIRED HER TO BECOME A PRO.

SIBLING

## MARCIA

ALEX'S LITTLE SISTER. STRONG WILLED, AND DOESN'T GET ALONG WITH EI-CHAN FOR SOME REASON. FYI THE SIBLINGS ARE BOTH GOOD LOOKING

EI-CHAN'S ROOMMATE

## ALEX

A PROFESSIONAL PLAYER WHO FINALLY MANAGED TO ADVANCE TO THE TOP 100 IN THE WORLD RANKINGS. DESPITE THAT, HE'S STILL HAVING A PRETTY HARD TIME BEING A PRO.

EI-CHAN'S ROOMMATE

## TAIRA ATSUSHI

AIMING TO BE A PRO WHILE ATTENDING SCHOOL IN AMERICA. HE TAKES CARE OF EI-CHAN BECAUSE HE'S A FELLOW JAPANESE.

EI-CHAN'S ROOMMATE

## KRISHNA

OVERSEAS STUDENT FROM INDIA. RISING STAR WHO'S PLAYING IN THE TOP LEVELS OF AMERICA JUNIOR COMPETITION.

# Baby Steps

CHARACTER INTRODUCTION

ベイビーステップ

EI-CHAN — MARUO EIICHIRO

MEMBER OF STC. HE DECLARES THAT HE'LL GIVE UP ON BECOMING A PRO AND FOCUS ON HIS COLLEGE PLACEMENT EXAMS IF HE CAN'T WIN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR NEXT YEAR!! WITH HIS COACH'S RECOMMENDATION, IN ORDER GET STRONG IN A SHORT PERIOD TIME, HE DECIDES TO GO ON A SHORT TERM STUDY ABROAD TO A TENNIS ACADEMY IN AMERICA!!

STAYING IN JAPAN

TAKASAKI NATSU — NACCHAN

MEMBER OF STC. TOP PLAYER IN KANAGAWA, AND IS A NATIONAL LEVEL FEMALE TENNIS PLAYER. DUE TO HER OWN SHORT TERM EXPERIENCES OVERSEAS, SHE STRONGLY ENCOURAGES EI-CHAN TO GO.



## MIKE

THE ACADEMY'S COACH. BEFORE, HE TAUGHT EI-CHAN HOW TO CREATE "THE BEST MENTAL CONDITION" AT STC.

# EI-CHAN STARTS THE 2-WEEK TENNIS STUDY ABROAD IN AMERICA!!

# Baby Steps

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#74 PROFESSIONAL•••••005
#75 COMMON SENSE•••••023
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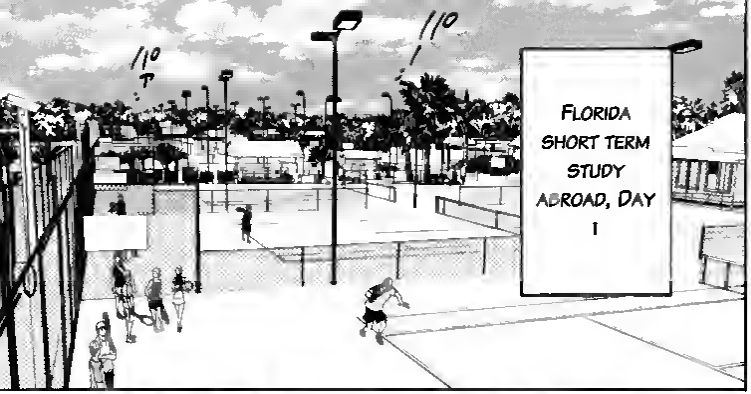
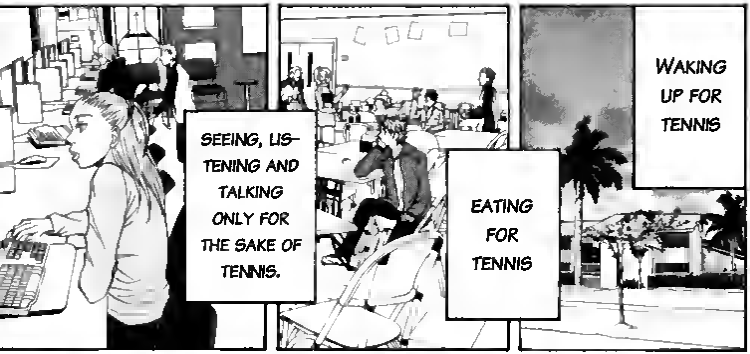
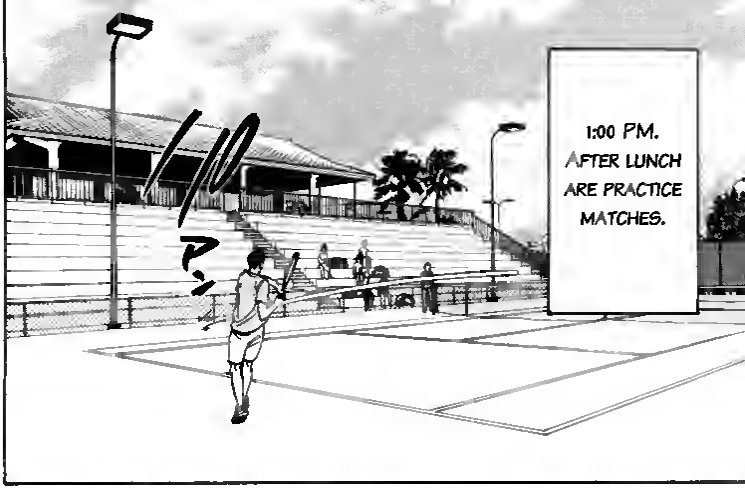
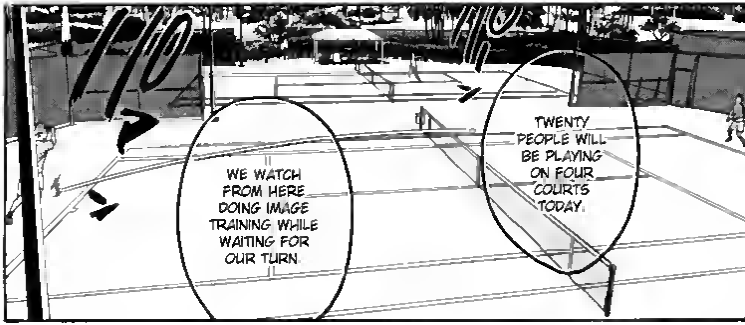
# to Giant Strides


FLORIDA SHORT TERM STUDY ABROAD, DAY 1


WAKING UP FOR TENNIS
EATING FOR TENNIS
SEEING, LISTENING AND TALKING ONLY FOR THE SAKE OF TENNIS.

#74 PROFESSIONAL
TWO WEEKS OF ONLY TENNIS HAVE JUST BEGUN...


1:00 PM.
AFTER LUNCH ARE PRACTICE MATCHES.


WE WATCH FROM HERE DOING IMAGE TRAINING WHILE WAITING FOR OUR TURN.
TWENTY PEOPLE WILL BE PLAYING ON FOUR COURTS TODAY.

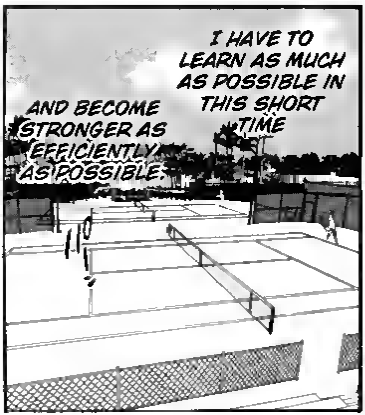
ON WEEKENDS, THERE ARE OFTEN-TIMES COMPETITIONS HELD SOMEWHERE, SO WE SOMETIMES PARTICIPATE IN THOSE.
ON WEEKDAY AFTER-NOONS, AFTER THESE PRACTICE MATCHES, WE GO ON WITH WRAP-UP PRACTICES THAT ALSO INCLUDE SELF-REFLECTION
THAT'S THE END OF COURT PRACTICE.

IT'S MY TENNIS NOTES.
HEY, I'VE BEEN WONDERING FOR A WHILE,
BUT WHAT ARE YOU WRITING?
AH... THIS?
Wow....
AH, THEN THIS ONE ....
TENNIS NOTES? CAN I SEE?
WA...WAIT, THAT HOW MANY ARE THERE?
THEY'RE MAINLY NOTES, BUT THEY'RE FOR REFRESHING WHAT I'VE LEARNED OR TO REFLECT BACK ON PREVIOUS MATCHES.
YOU'VE GOT SOME INCREDIBLE HANDWRITING...
SO WHAT ARE THESE FOR?

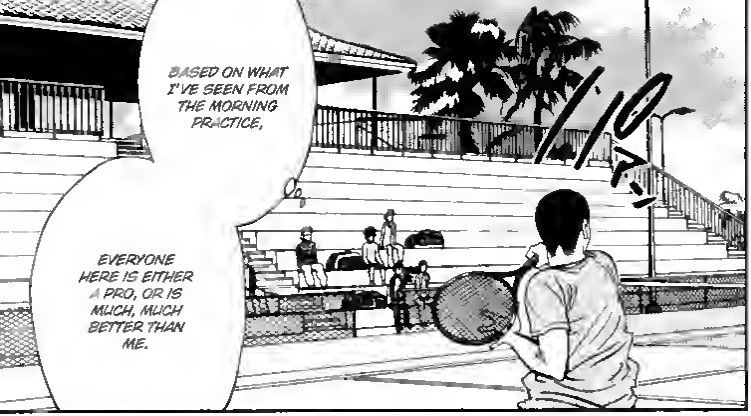
What's this ? I can't believe it...
Wow! I've heard the Japanese are really meticulous but it was really true
No, no. Not everyone's like this!!
DUNLOP
prince

sorry··

Be quiet!! Watching the match is practice too.

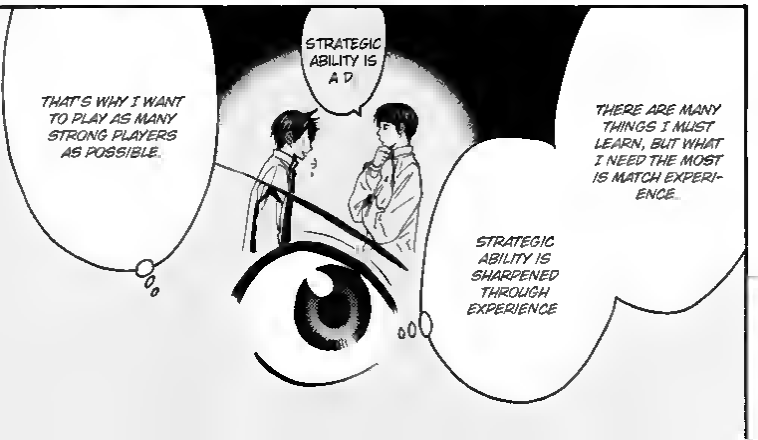

I HAVE TO LEARN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE IN THIS SHORT TIME
AND BECOME STRONGER AS EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE.

EVEN IF THIS IS THE IDEAL ENVIRONMENT,
I CAN ONLY STAY HERE FOR TWO WEEKS.
THAT'S RIGHT ...


BASED ON WHAT I'VE SEEN FROM THE MORNING PRACTICE,
EVERYONE HERE IS EITHER A PRO, OR IS MUCH, MUCH BETTER THAN ME.
パーン

IN-CRED-IBLE...

IF IT WAS JAPAN, IT'D BE SOME-THING LIKE THIS.

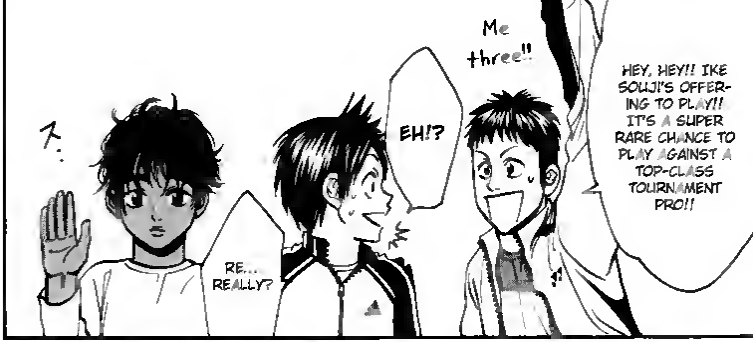

STRATEGIC ABILITY IS A D
THAT'S WHY I WANT TO PLAY AS MANY STRONG PLAYERS AS POSSIBLE.
THERE ARE MANY THINGS I MUST LEARN, BUT WHAT I NEED THE MOST IS MATCH EXPERI-ENCE.
STRATEGIC ABILITY IS SHARPENED THROUGH EXPERIENCE

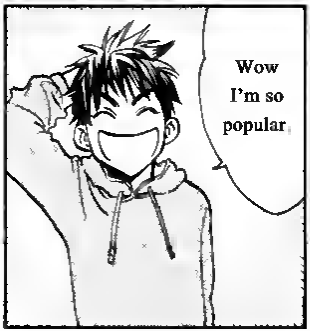
!!
All right! Next!
Maruo and Alex. Get in!
HE SAYS IT'S YOUR TURN.
A MATCH WITH ALEX ...
THAT MEANS ...
...MMM?
MY FIRST MATCH AGAINST A PRO...!!

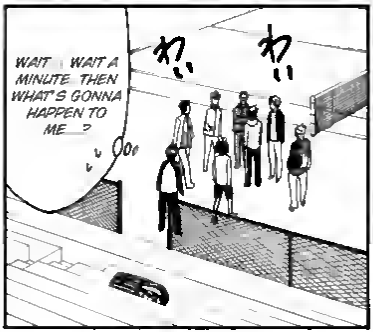
IS SOMETHING ...WRONG?
?
~~~
~~~

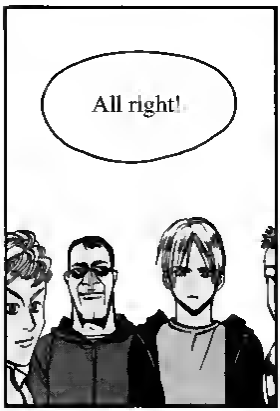
I saw Souji a moment ago, but is he free right now?
Maybe. Shall we go ask?
I WANT TO PLAY!! I SOMEHOW WANT TO PLAY HIM!!
EVEN THOUGH IT'S MY CHANCE TO PLAY AGAINST A PRO...
You called?
Ex... excuse me!!
Ohh, Souji. Sorry, but can you come here for a sec?
HEY~
I-... IKE-KUN!?

I SEE, SO THAT'S HOW IT IS...
Fine, I'll play.
U-... ummm...
I think you'll be a better opponent for Alex than Maruo.
DA-... DAMN IT.
IF ONLY I COULD SPEAK BETTER ENGLISH ...
Excuse...!
ザワ
ザワ
WAIT...
EH?
Sorry Thanks for the help
Really?
Me too!
Wait a sec I wanna play Souji too!!


HEY, HEY!! IKE SOUJI'S OFFERING TO PLAY!! IT'S A SUPER RARE CHANCE TO PLAY AGAINST A TOP-CLASS TOURNAMENT PRO!!
Me three!!
EH!?
RE... REALLY?


Wow I'm so popular


WAIT... WAIT A MINUTE. THEN WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO ME...?


All right!

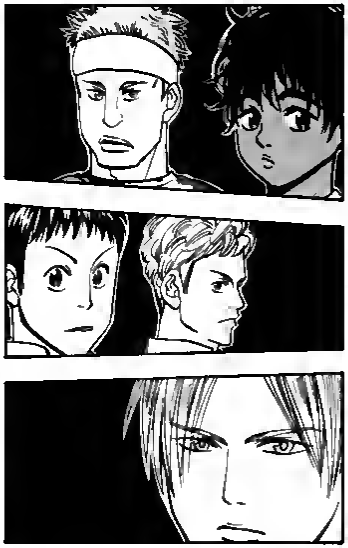
Mmmmm... but I can't play that many in just one day
And I want to play against someone who's good too...
So, let's see...

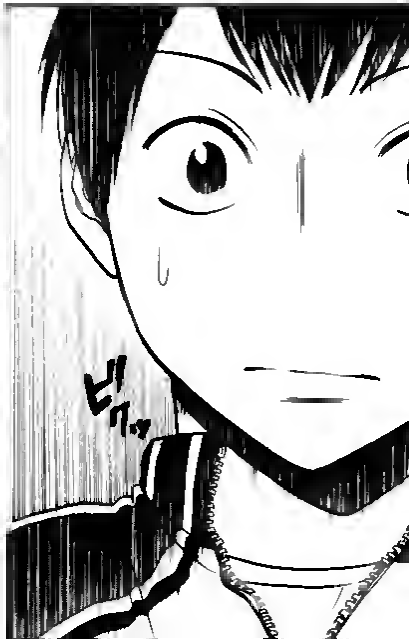
I'll play only against the people who can beat Maruo!
ビッ
HUH?
... ME!?

If I can play with Souji I'll be glad to play Maruo right now
but does it mean he's that strong?

Who knows?
huh?

COME ON, IT'S FINE ISN'T IT MARUO-KUN? IN YOUR CASE I'LL PLAY YOU IF YOU CAN BEAT ANYONE HERE
UH... UMM... WHY ME...?
So I'll arrange for a match with anyone who beats Maruo anytime in the next two weeks
No objections, right?





Well, then I'll be doing my training,
so call me once the opponent is decided
All right, Souji
But I'm sure he won't let you win that easily
So you at least have some expectations of him

GOOD LUCK!
IS THIS AN OPPORTUNITY HE CREATED FOR ME?!
!!

Ye-... yes!!
THANKS, IKE-KUN!!
Well, then Let's begin.
sender Natsu
add Ike Souji.
e Ei-chan
So, go help Ei-chan
out once he gets
here! I'm sure he'll
et super strong.
en see ya
SO, SOME-THING LIKE THAT?

TEN YEARS AGO...
AMAZING, SOU-CHAN!!
YOU'RE DEFINITELY MEANT FOR TENNIS!
REALLY?
BUT I'M GOOD AT SOCCER AND BASEBALL, TOO~
TENNIS IS DEFINITELY BETTER!!
SOU-CHAN WILL DEF-FFINITELY
GET SUPER STRONG!!
SHUT UP!!
I'M A GENIUS AT EVERY-THING, YOU KNOW?
BUT, WELL... SURE, WHY NOT? I'LL GET A BIT MORE SERIOUS.
"NOBODY TRAINS

FOR NATSU TO SAY THAT SOMEONE WILL GET "SUPER STRONG"... IT HASN'T HAPPENED SINCE THEN.
Hmmm... well then
One set match!

ミキ
ミキ
Alex to serve!

How's my brother?
He's about to play Maruo, but things have gotten interesting
Ohh, Marcia
Hi, Atsushi, Krishna!
The winner gets to play THE Ike Souji
Awesome! Then Alex will definitely get to challenge Souji
#75 COMMON SENSE
I know him. Eiichiro, right?
There's no way a pro would lose against someone aiming to win an amateur competition.
Based on practice it's definitely Alex
Normally that's what you'd think but I wonder how it'll actually turn out
But Souji seems to have High expectations of him so...
Fibre

IKE-KUN CREATED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ME TO PLAY AGAINST A PRO!!
SINCE THAT LAST MATCH I PLAYED AGAINST IKE-KUN WAS STOPPED MID-WAY.
THIS IS MY FIRST REAL MATCH AGAINST A PRO
WILL I EVEN BE A PROPER OPPONENT AGAINST HIM RIGHT NOW?!
NO... IF HE'S RANKED IN THE TOP 1000, HE SHOULD JUST BE SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN TAKUMA-SAN.
AND THAT TAKUMA-SAN LOST TO NABAE-KUN THIS SUMMER
IN ORDER TO WIN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR, I CAN'T BE LOSING HERE.

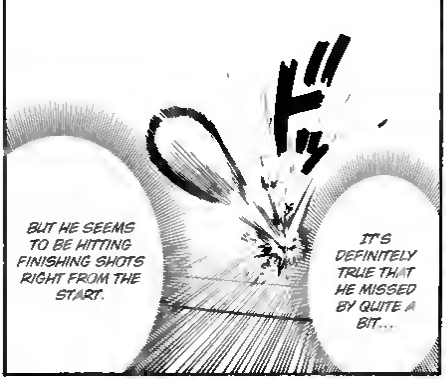
Alex to serve!
COME!!

RGH
HA
IT'S HEAVY !!

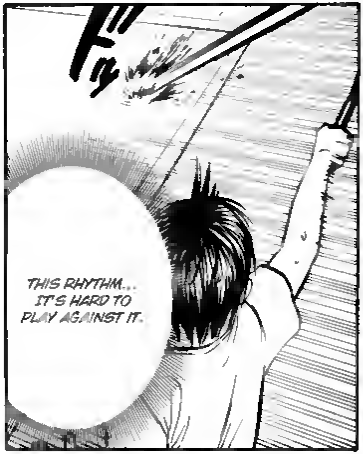
Rgh, this is no time to be amazed.
THE POWER OF THE SERVE IS ON A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LEVEL. SO THIS IS... A PRO
15 – LOVE.
U----M... ANYWAY, I HAVE TO SOMEHOW FORCE HIM INTO MY ATTACK PATTERN...
LET'S GO FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS!!
① RETURN IT DEEP INTO THE CORNER AND GAIN THE ADVANTAGE WITH STRONG.
② ONCE YOU GAIN THE ADVANTAGE, USE IT&4 CONTROL TO GO FOR A FINISH IF YOU CAN. EVEN IF YOU CAN'T, MOVE UP FOR A VOLLEY AND KEEP THE ADVANTAGE.
③ BY MOVING UP FOR THE VOLLEY, GO FOR A 100% FINISH GIVEN THE CHANCE.
RGH

ALL RIGHT! I SOMEHOW RETURNED IT!!
SHOOT, IT'S WEAK!!
HEAVY...
RGH

I NEED TO USE THIS MISS TO GET FAMILIAR WITH HIS BALLS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE...
THANK GOOD-NESS... MAYBE HE'S ALSO A BIT ROUGH, JUST LIKE HIS SISTER
Out! 15 – 15.
BUT... WHAT IS THIS...
HA
THIS UNEASE?
GUH!


BUT HE SEEMS TO BE HITTING FINISHING SHOTS RIGHT FROM THE START.
IT'S DEFINITELY TRUE THAT HE MISSED BY QUITE A BIT...

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE POWER OF THE BALL. THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE.

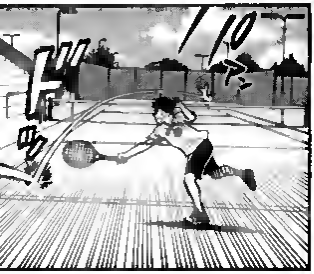

THIS RHYTHM... IT'S HARD TO PLAY AGAINST IT.

EVEN AT THE BASELINE, HIS ATTACKS HAVE LEFT ME WITH NO ROOM TO BREATHE,
AND HIS VOLLEYS ARE ONE-SHOT-KILLS.

AT THIS RATE, HE'LL HAVE A PRETTY HARD TIME.
MARUO-KUN'S PLAYING A NICE TENNIS WITH VERY FEW MISTAKES, BUT

Brother complex!!
Big bro~~~!! That was great!!

HA
The reason I didn't want to play against you is not because you aren't a pro
Most of the players who come from Asia don't know the "basics" of this world.


10

The "basics" of Tennis are changed every day by those who stand on top of the world
This place is closest to the tides of the "basics"...
It can't be helped that an incredible gap is created between
th. on.s who have seen and experienced that change, and the ones who haven't.

Game, Alex.
3 – 0.

ゴク
ゴク
ミ
DUKE
DUN
カキ
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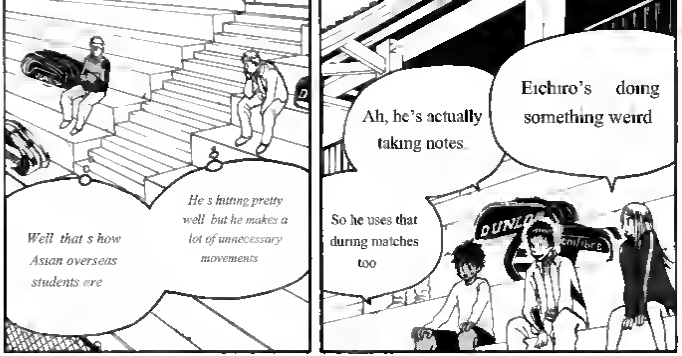
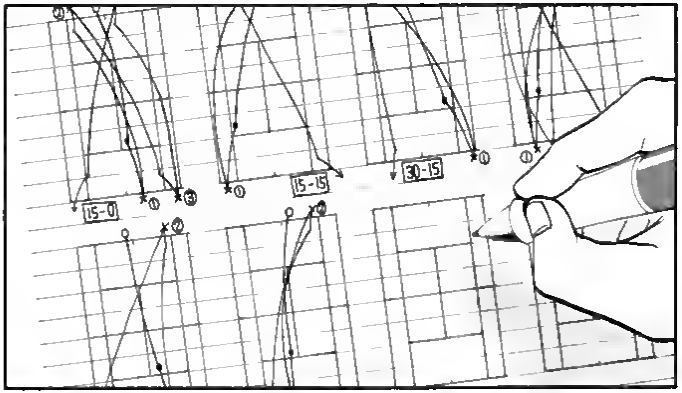
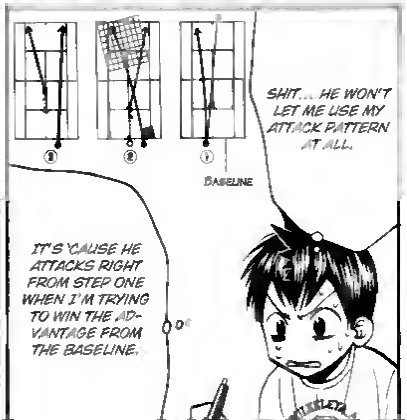
カキ
カキ
Notebook?


Well that s how Asian overseas students are
He s hitting pretty well but he makes a lot of unnecessary movements
Ah, he's actually taking notes.
Eichiro's doing something weird
So he uses that during matches too
DUNLOP
Sniffer

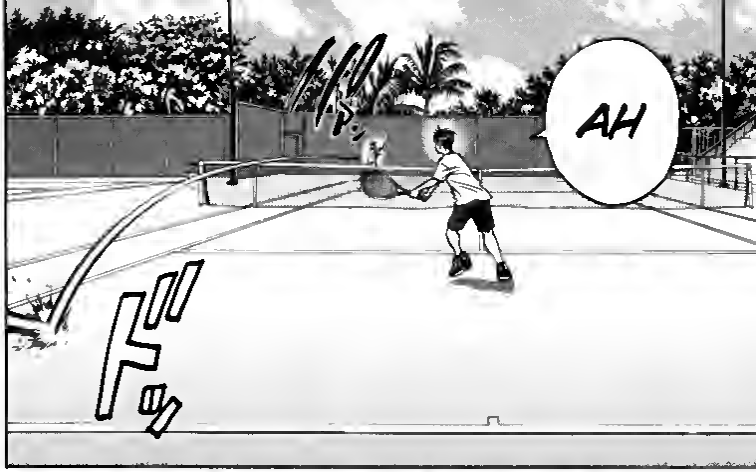

15-0
15-15
30-15

BUT I'M STARTING TO GET THE HANG OF IT...


SHIT... HE WON'T LET ME USE MY ATTACK PATTERN AT ALL.
BASELINE
IT'S 'CAUSE HE ATTACKS RIGHT FROM STEP ONE WHEN I'M TRYING TO WIN THE AD-VANTAGE FROM THE BASELINE.

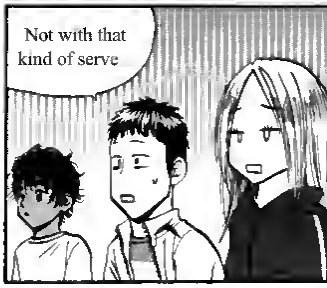
BASICALLY, ALL HIS SHOTS ARE "LOW RISK FINISHES"
RATHER THAN GOING FOR HIGH RISK VOLLEYS, HE TRIES TO GO FOR THE FINISH USING THE LOW-RISK BASELINE SHOTS.
THE ONLY TIME HE COMES FOR A VOLLEY IS WHEN HE'S 100% SURE TO FINISH IT WITH ONE SHOT.
SINCE HE DOESN'T HAVE THE "① TAKE THE ADVANTAGE" STEP IN MY ATTACK PATTERN,
HIS TEMPO OF ATTACK FEELS FAST AND UNEASY.
② FINISH THE 100% CERTAIN BALL.
① GO FOR THE FINISH IF YOU CAN
③ FINISH THE 100% CERTAIN BALL.
② GO FOR THE FINISH IF YOU CAN
① TAKE THE ADVANTAGE
IT'S DIFFERENT FROM THE SAME BASELINER, MIYAGAWA-KUN,
AND FROM ARAYA-KUN, WHO CHARGES USING HIS SPEED AND POWER...
THIS IS PROBABLY THE SOURCE OF MY UNEASE
TIME!
IT'S NOT A SIMPLE MATTER IF HE CAN GO FOR THE FINISH WITHOUT EVEN GAINING THE ADVANTAGE...
AND IT'S ALL POSSIBLE BECAUSE HE HAS THOSE HEAVY SHOTS
EVEN HIS "SLIGHT ROUGHNESS" IS NOTHING IF YOU CONSIDER HOW ALL HIS SHOTS ARE FINISHERS.

WE HAVE ME, WHO NEEDS THREE STEPS TO TAKE A POINT, AND ALEX, WHO ONLY NEEDS TWO
WHAT SHOULD I DO TO FILL THIS GAP?
IF HE'S A TWO-STEP,
SERVE & VOLLEYS ARE A SINGLE STEP!!
!
HA
THEN I'LL BE EVEN MORE AGGRESSIVE!!

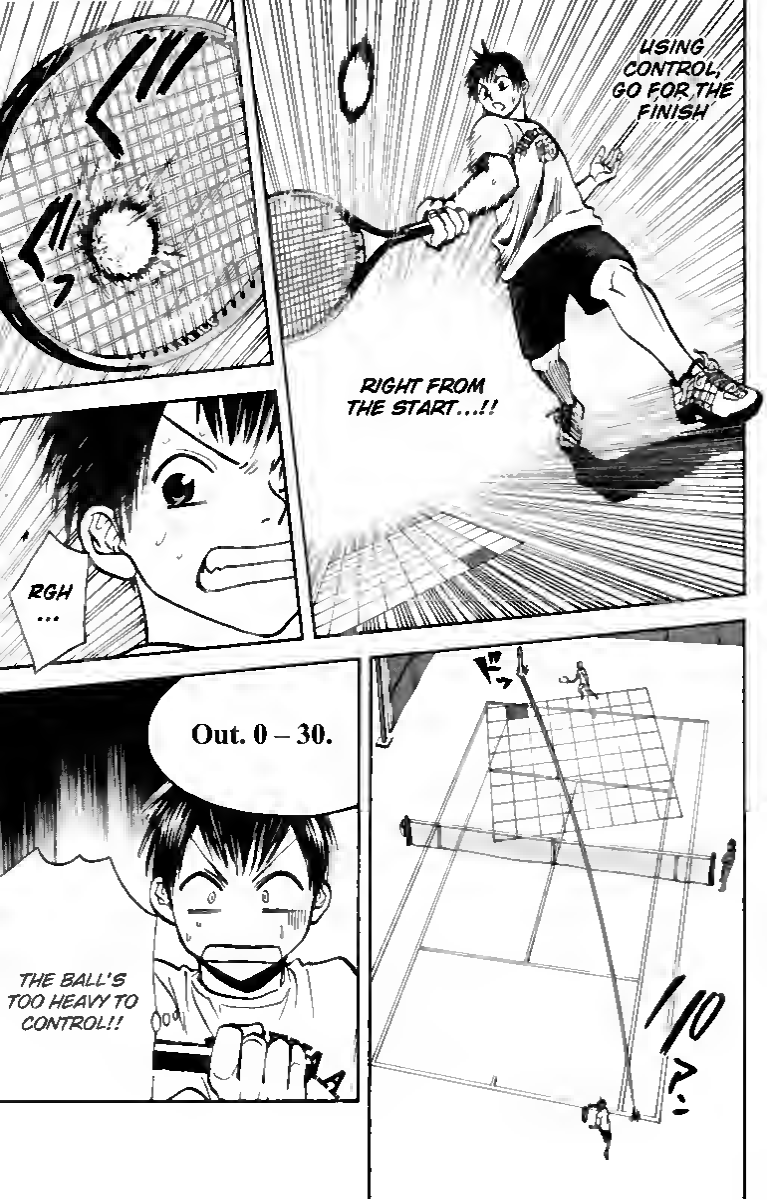

AH
ドッ

THAT WAS WAY TOO RECK-LESS

He started changing his attack pattern


Not with that kind of serve

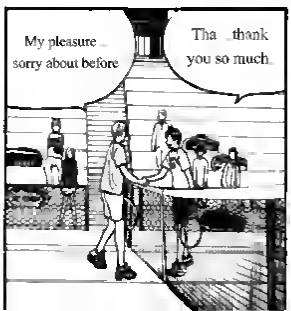
HA
THEN WHAT SHOULD I DO?


USING CONTROL, GO FOR THE FINISH
RIGHT FROM THE START...!!
RGH ...
Out. 0 – 30.
THE BALL'S TOO HEAVY TO CONTROL!!

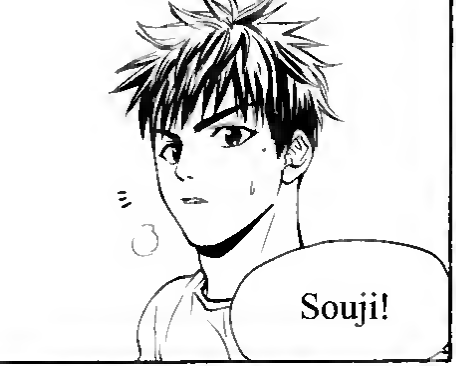
HA
ERGH
ALL I CAN DO IS DEFEND!!
NO... BEFORE THAT, I'VE GOT TO GET USED TO THESE HEAVY SHOTS!!
I FEEL LIKE I MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING IF I CAN GET USED TO THIS TEMPO...
5 – 0.
Game. Alex
4 – 0.

Count:
6 – 0.
Game, set.
Won by Alex.

THERE'S THIS KIND OF TENNIS TOO....!!



Baby Steps


Souji!

I beat Maruo, so I came here to play you as promised.
#76 ANALYSIS

....

Hmmm.... Well, guess that's about right.

The score?!
6 – 0
That was fast!!
For real?!

I have a question. What did you mean by that back then?
But I'm sure he won't let you win that easily.
Okay, well. I'm ready.
We can start as soon as you're set, Alex.
Wait a sec, Souji.
Nothing much. That's literally what I thought
'Cause he started playing tennis when he was 15
Don't you think that's pretty amazing?
…It hasn't even been two years since he started?

Then, next: Chris and Pedro. Come on down.
Eh...? But we were gonna play Maruo...
Won't you feel bad if you make him play that many games in a row?
ゴク
ゴク
BULKELEYA.A
Marcia!?
じーっ
I don't get it.

And what's up with that face?
15 - 0
15 - 15
Why're you so meticulous taking notes of the match you lost?
Don't you feel bad about losing to my brother?
Eh?
Eh?
SHE SAYS "LOOKING SO SATISFIED EVEN THOUGH YOU LOST. ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF MY BROTHER?"
EH? I... WAS I MAKING SUCH A FACE?
U~~M, SO...
Your brother strong… I am happy… that what I think.
I WAS ABLE TO LEARN A LOT FROM JUST THIS ONE MATCH, SO SO I FEEL GOOD
OF OF COURSE I'M SAD, BUT...

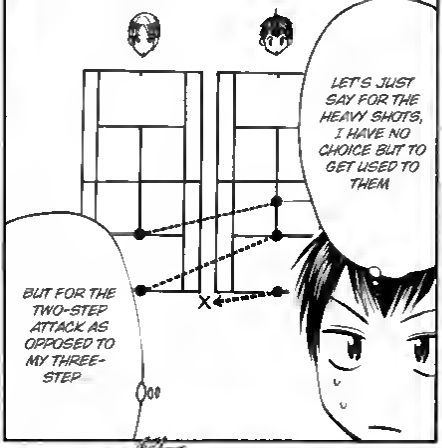
IT'S GONNA GET TOUGHER AND TOUGHER. YOU SHOULD GET IT FILLED RIGHT NOW WHILE YOU STILL CAN.
I'LL BE GONE FOR A BIT, THEN.
AH... I RAN OUT OF WATER ALREADY. MAYBE I'M TOO NERVOUS...
My brain was running out of water too


AA


Okay Don't forget You'll be playing another match later
U~~~m ,,, Coach, water ,,, Water
Ah,,, yes

AAAA
CRYSTAL GEYSER
ALPINE SPRING WATER

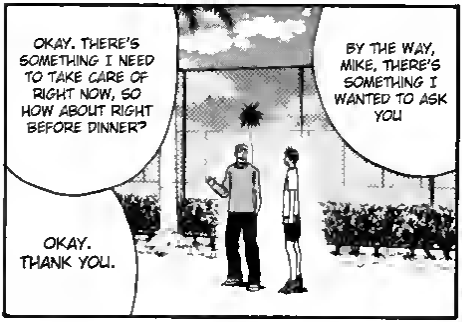
Eichiro's a weirdo....


LET'S JUST SAY FOR THE HEAVY SHOTS, I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO GET USED TO THEM
BUT FOR THE TWO-STEP ATTACK AS OPPOSED TO MY THREE-STEP

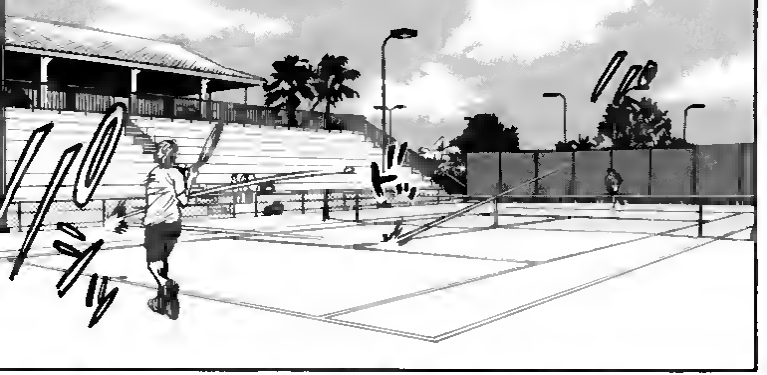
BUT WHAT SHOULD I DO?

HEY, EI-CHAN, HOW'S PRACTICE?
AH, MIKE!

I NEED A PLAN.


OKAY. THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO TAKE CARE OF RIGHT NOW, SO HOW ABOUT RIGHT BEFORE DINNER?
BY THE WAY, MIKE, THERE'S SOMETHING I WANTED TO ASK YOU
OKAY. THANK YOU.

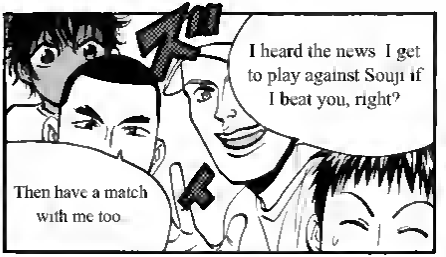
THEN IT WAS WORTH COMING HERE
IT'S BEEN PRETTY FUN



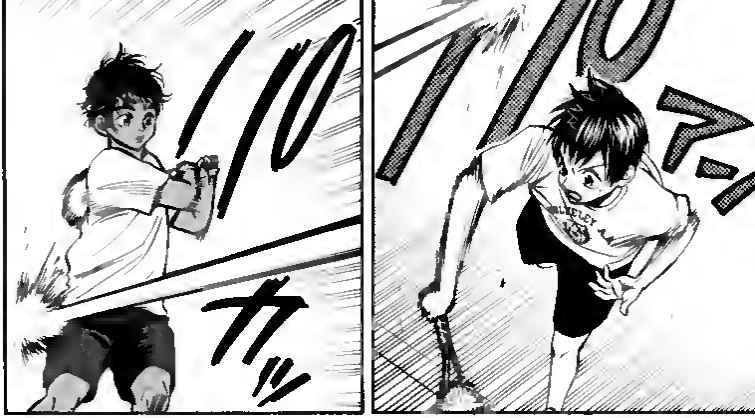
THIS MATCH IS ABOUT TO END, SO LET'S PLAY AFTER IT'S DONE
No, I think you should play me

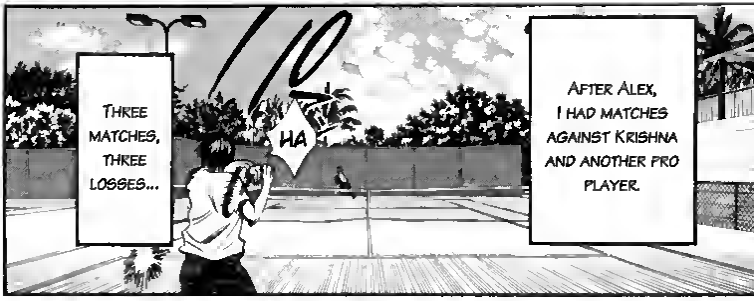
HEY! MARUO-KUN, THIS WAY, THIS WAY!!
YES?

All right, next! Maruo and Krishna. Come on in.


I heard the news. I get to play against Souji if I beat you, right?
Then have a match with me too.

SO POPU-LAR...
although it's like-kun
BUCKELEY

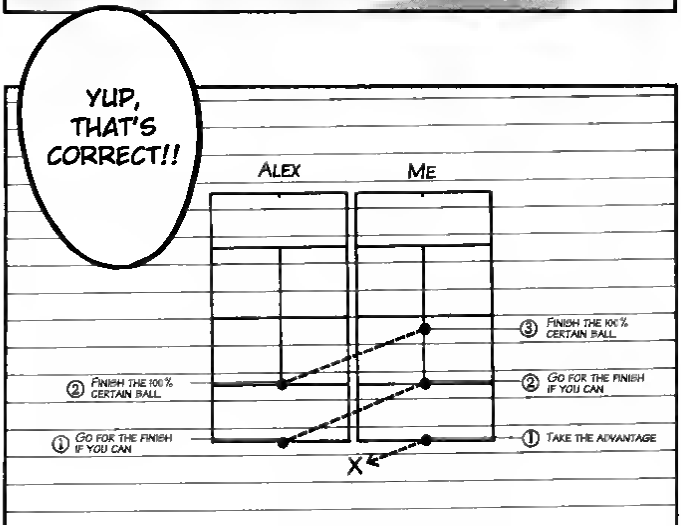



Three matches, three losses...
HA
After Alex, I had matches against Krishna and another pro player.

It seems I'll need much more accurate timing when I step in for the swing.
Although it differed slightly from person to person, every player here had heavy shots.
But playing more matches helped me clarify a lot of stuff.

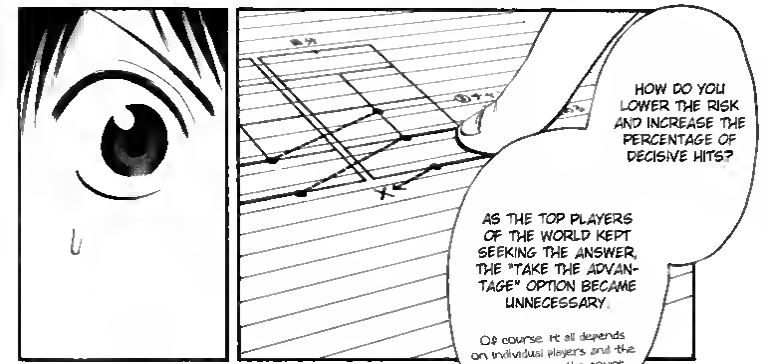
I HAVE TO QUICKLY FIND A WAY TO COUNTER THIS...
AND AS EXPECTED, THEY ALL USED THE BASIC 2-STEP ATTACK JUST LIKE ALEX.
IT SEEMS TO BE THE NORM OF THIS PLACE.

!?
!!


YUP, THAT'S CORRECT!!
ALEX
ME
① GO FOR THE FINISH IF YOU CAN
② FINISH THE 100% CERTAIN BALL
③ FINISH THE 100% CERTAIN BALL
② GO FOR THE FINISH IF YOU CAN
① TAKE THE ADVANTAGE
X

AS EXPECTED OF EI-CHAN. THAT'S SOME AMAZING ANALYSIS.
YUP. YOU COULD CALL THIS A BIG SHIFT IN MINDSET THAT'S BEEN GETTING MORE PREVALENT IN THE TENNIS WORLD OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS
REALLY?

THE PHYSIQUES OF THE PLAYERS HAVE IMPROVED, AND THEIR POWER AND SPEED ARE GETTING BETTER AND BETTER
AS SUCH, RATHER THAN MOVING FORWARD FOR A HIGH RISK VOLLEY,
IT'S MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE TO KEEP ATTACKING FROM THE LOW-RISK BASELINE.
THAT'S WHY GOING FOR THE VOLLEY IS LIMITED TO ONLY WHEN THE PLAYER HAS AN ABSOLUTE ADVANTAGE


HOW DO YOU LOWER THE RISK AND INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF DECISIVE HITS?
AS THE TOP PLAYERS OF THE WORLD KEPT SEEKING THE ANSWER, THE "TAKE THE ADVANTAGE" OPTION BECAME UNNECESSARY.
Of course it all depends on individual players and the situation on the court

ACQUIRING MORE POWER AND SPEED... IS THAT RIGHT?
YOU JUST HAVE TO CHANGE YOUR BASIC MINDSET, TOO.
BUT... WHAT SHOULD I DO TO WIN AGAINST THIS BRAND OF TENNIS?
OF COURSE! THAT IS WHY WE HAVE A TRAINING FACILITY THAT INCORPORATES THE WORLD'S LATEST TECHNOLOGIES.
I UNDERSTAND THAT IT'S MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE TO ATTACK FROM THE BACK.
THIS IS... JUST A THOUGHT.
BUT YOUR ATTACK CAN BE ANYTHING AS LONG AS IT'S DECISIVE, RIGHT?
WHAT'S WRONG, EI-CHAN?

THEN RATHER THAN RELYING ON SPEED OR POWER FOR THE DECISIVENESS,
CAN'T I USE CONTROL INSTEAD?
BUT YOUR SPEED AND POWER ARE SURE TO IMPROVE THROUGH TRAINING,
WHILE IT'S PRETTY DIFFICULT TO IMPROVE CONTROL.
CONTROL?
OF COURSE, I DO WANT TO INCREASE MY SPEED AND POWER, TOO
BUT IN MY CASE, I FEEL IT'S MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE TO FOCUS MORE ON CONTROL...
YUP... ALTHOUGH IT VARIES FROM PERSON TO PERSON, THAT'S NORMALLY THE CASE.
REALLY!?

I JUST THOUGHT IT'D BE MUCH BETTER TO CONCENTRATE MORE ON AREAS IN WHICH I FEEL MORE CONFIDENT.
WHA... WHAT DO YOU THINK?
SOUNDS FUN!
ALL THE STAFF LOVES NEW AND INTERESTING IDEAS.
THIS IS THE FRONTLINE OF TENNIS.
CA-. CAN YOU REALLY DO THAT?
OF COURSE.
THEN I'LL ASK THE TECHNICAL ADVISER TO THINK ABOUT EI-CHAN'S OWN SPECIAL TRAINING MENU.
THANK YOU SO MUCH!!
I'LL ASK FOR IT TO BE DONE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
Maybe even tomorrow

8:00 PM.
FREE TIME
AFTER DINNER.
……
ムスッ
I HEAR HE GOT TOTALLY OWNED BY IKE SOUJI
ヒソヒソ
DOE-... DOESN'T HE SEEM TO BE IN A PRETTY BAD MOOD?
I'm going to sleep Good night!
バタン
……
THE TWO SIBLINGS BOTH HATE TO LOSE, SO...

Who, Alex?
You know how he gets instantly mad when he loses
Among us, he's probably the one who hates losing the most
Krishna's always cool,
AND THERE'S EVEN SOMEONE WHO GETS ALL HAPPY AFTER LOSING
あはは
The angry one isn't necessarily the one who hates losing the most.
Huh? Really?
?
ANYWAY, I HOPE HIS NORMAL MOOD RETURNS SOON
HA— I'M TIRED, SO I'M GOING TO BED.
AH... I STILL HAVE SOME STUFF TO TAKE CARE OF, SO...
Campus

Good night
Good night~
WELL, THEN.
バタン
EH?
MARUO-KUN, YOU'RE AN HONOR STUDENT IN SCHOOL, AREN'T YOU?
ALL RIGHT!
テニス40
Scratch
Scratch
Scratch
Scratch
Scratch
Scratch

Scratch scratch
Scratch scratch
Scratch scratch
くかー
Scratch scratch
Scratch scratch
Scratch scratch
Scratch scratch
Scratch scratch
Scratch scratch

ISN'T THERE A GOOD METHOD...?
IT'D REQUIRE STABILITY AND POWER, JUST LIKE THE TIME I PLAYED NABAE-KUN...
IF I'M GOING TO ATTACK FROM THE BASELINE, I'LL NEED TO HAVE SOME POWER ALONG WITH THE 1164 CONTROL...
LET'S TRY THIS TOMORROW!
AH.. THAT'S RIGHT.

Florida Short-term Study Abroad: Morning of Day 2.

# #77 STRATEGY

I'M SLIGHTLY SLEEPY RIGHT NOW,
BUT I'LL BE FINE ONCE I'M ON THE COURT.

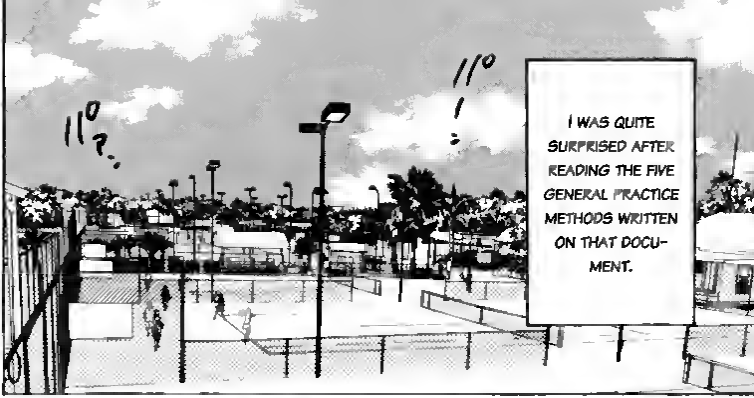
Are you sleep deprived from studying tennis all night?
Eh? .... Ah.... I am okay.
ARE YOU SURE? YOU SEEM REALLY TIRED.

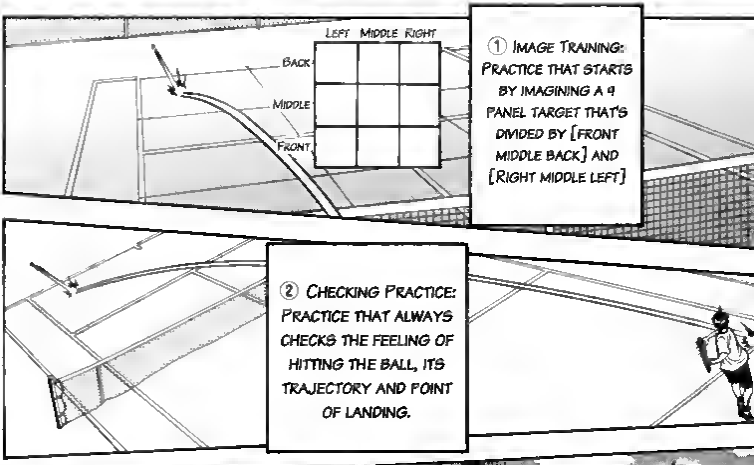
Good morning Guys!!

I wonder if I'll get to play Souji again if I beat Maruo one more time.
No! There's a ton of players waiting in line.
EVERYONE WANTS TO PLAY YOU, SO DON'T PUSH YOURSELF.

Also, this is for you, Eichiro...
Can I sit here, Alex?
Marcia
Mike told me to give it to you.
Hey!
EH!?
Why?
Thanks, Marcia!
IT'S THAT!!

*TL NOTE: Ren-shuu-hou is the pronunciation for "practice menu" in Japanese.

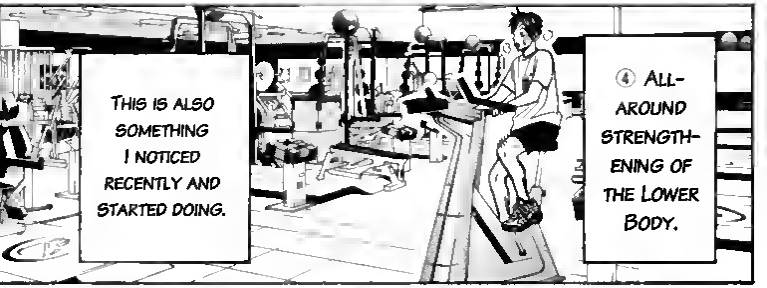

I WAS QUITE SURPRISED AFTER READING THE FIVE GENERAL PRACTICE METHODS WRITTEN ON THAT DOCUMENT.


LEFT MIDDLE RIGHT
BACK
MIDDLE
FRONT
① IMAGE TRAINING: PRACTICE THAT STARTS BY IMAGINING A 9 PANEL TARGET THAT'S DIVIDED BY [FRONT MIDDLE BACK] AND [RIGHT MIDDLE LEFT]

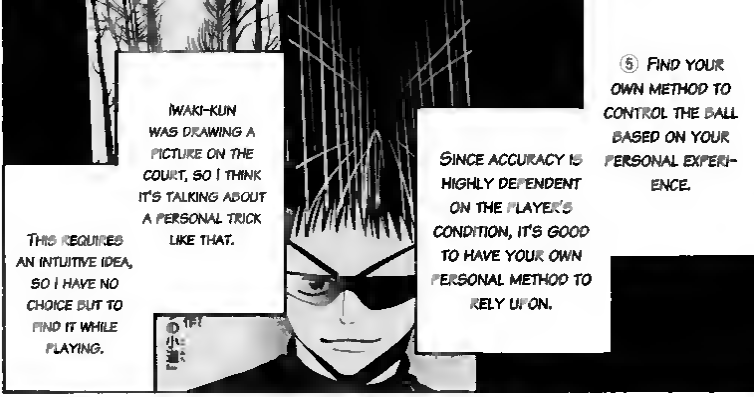

② CHECKING PRACTICE: PRACTICE THAT ALWAYS CHECKS THE FEELING OF HITTING THE BALL, ITS TRAJECTORY AND POINT OF LANDING.

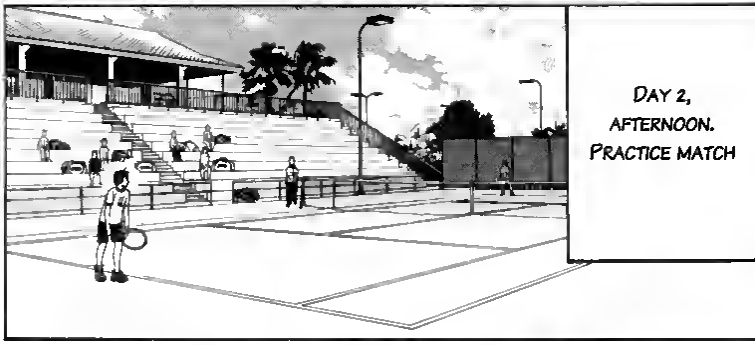
③ REPETITION PRACTICE: PRACTICE REPEATING ① AND ② WITH AS MUCH MOTIVATION AS POSSIBLE.

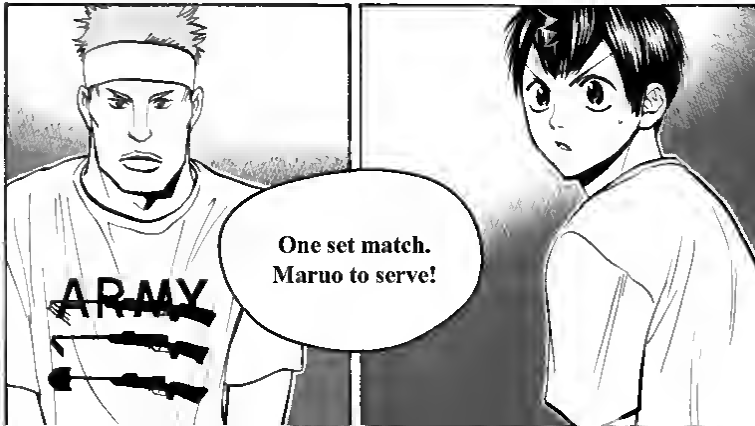
1/64!!
AND FOR FUN IN JAPAN.
SOMEHOW, THESE THREE WERE THE THINGS I WAS ALREADY DOING IN ORDER TO WIN...


THIS IS ALSO SOMETHING I NOTICED RECENTLY AND STARTED DOING.
④ ALL-AROUND STRENGTHENING OF THE LOWER BODY.

JUST AS I THOUGHT, I LIKE CONTROLLING THE BALL,
AND AM SUITED FOR IT.


⑤ Find your own method to control the ball based on your personal experience.
Since accuracy is highly dependent on the player's condition, it's good to have your own personal method to rely upon.
Iwaki-kun was drawing a picture on the court, so I think it's talking about a personal trick like that.
This requires an intuitive idea, so I have no choice but to find it while playing.


Day 2, afternoon. Practice match


ARMY
One set match. Maruo to serve!

BUT...
I CAN'T WIN THE MATCHES HERE WITH CONTROL ALONE
RGH
I HAVE TO MAKE THIS TWO-STEP TENNIS MY OWN...
HA
IT'S ALSO REALLY TIRING, SINCE I HAVE TO MAINTAIN A CONSTANT HIGH-TENSION.
CRAP... IF I TRY TO ATTACK RIGHT FROM THE START, I END UP MAKING A LOT OF MISTAKES, 'CAUSE I'M NOT USED TO IT.

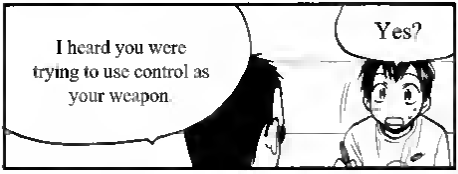
BUT I NEED TO MAKE THIS STYLE MY OWN.
EVEN IF IT'S HARD RIGHT NOW, IF I ENDURE IT AND KEEP ON TRYING, IT'LL DEFINITELY BE WORTH IT.
RGH
AND IN THIS STYLE, I'LL PRIORITIZE CONTROL OVER SPEED OR POWER!!
I HAVE TO ADOPT THIS NEW STYLE I LEARNED IN AMERICA, AND USE MY OWN METHODS TO PUT IT TO PRACTICE.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I'LL COMPROMISE ON SPEED AND POWER!!
...THAT MEANS, IN OTHER WORDS I HAVE TO HIT THE BALL WITH ENOUGH CONTROL TO BE DECISIVE, AND USE AS MUCH POWER AS POSSIBLE... WAIT...
THIS IS PRETTY HARD!!
...BUT ...I'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO ACHIEVE IT STEP BY STEP.

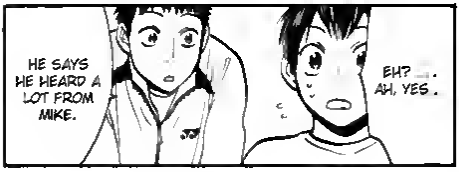
MORE...!?
FIRST, HIT THE BALL TO A TOUGH SPOT BY STEPPING IN AT THE RIGHT TIME.
ALL RIGHT ...
!!

Game. 3 – 0.
Pedro lead.

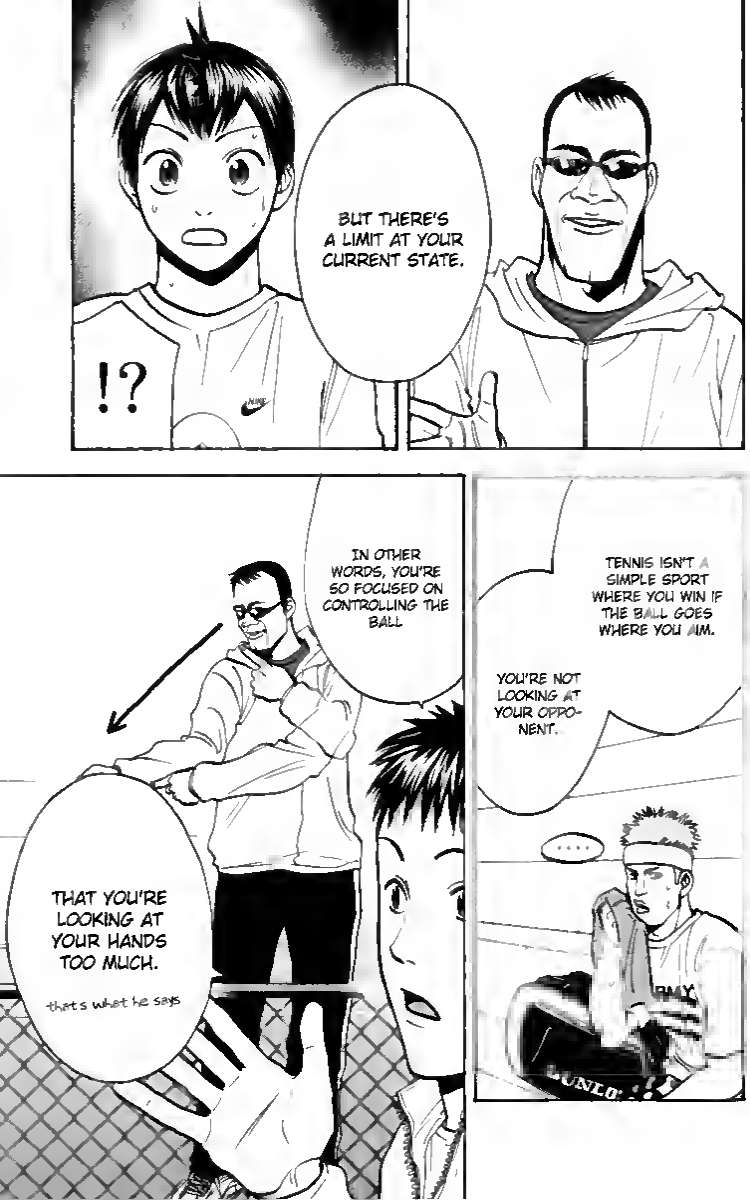
SHOULD I TRY HITTING WITH EVEN MORE POWER?
CRAP... WITH HIS SKILLS, EVEN IF IT'S 1164 CONTROL, HE CAN RETURN IT EASILY.

HE'S HAVING A HARD TIME TODAY, TOO


I heard you were trying to use control as your weapon.
Yes?

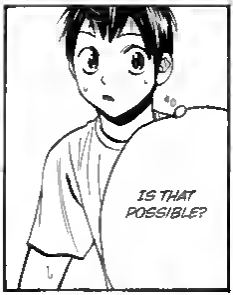

HE SAYS HE HEARD A LOT FROM MIKE.
EH? ... AH, YES.

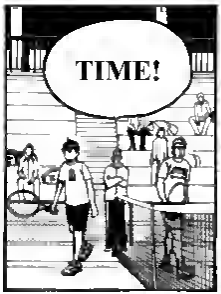
Hey, Maruo.
OR SHOULD I GO FOR EVEN TIGHTER CONTROL...?


!?
BUT THERE'S A LIMIT AT YOUR CURRENT STATE.
TENNIS ISN'T A SIMPLE SPORT WHERE YOU WIN IF THE BALL GOES WHERE YOU AIM.
YOU'RE NOT LOOKING AT YOUR OPPONENT.
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU'RE SO FOCUSED ON CONTROLLING THE BALL
THAT YOU'RE LOOKING AT YOUR HANDS TOO MUCH.
that's what he says

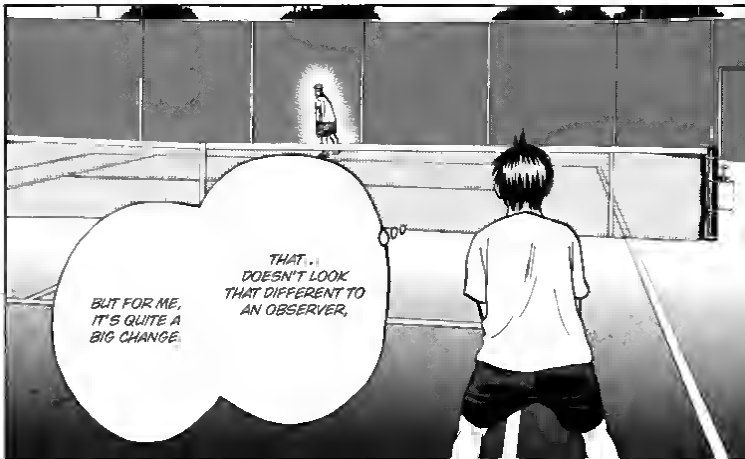
I'M LOOKING AT MY HANDS TOO MUCH ...?
BUT... I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE ACCURATE CONTROL IF I DON'T WATCH MY AIM...

ぽかん


IS THAT POSSIBLE?


TIME!

HE SAYS YOU SHOULDN'T ONLY PAY ATTENTION AT YOUR AIM, BUT ALSO AT YOUR OPPONENT AND THE ENTIRE COURT.

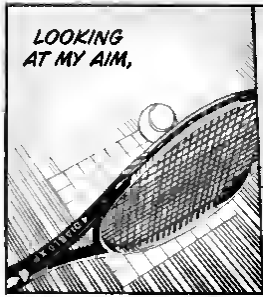

BUT FOR ME, IT'S QUITE A BIG CHANGE.
THAT.. DOESN'T LOOK THAT DIFFERENT TO AN OBSERVER.

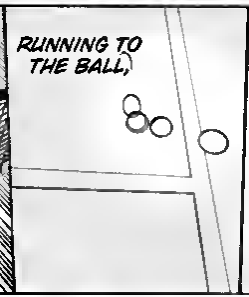
LOOK AT THE OPPONENT...
ALL RIGHT.
AND THE ENTIRE COURT, AND...
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TOO MUCH!!
CONTROL!!

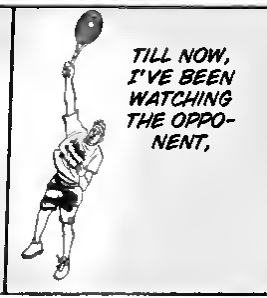
NO GOOD... I HAVE A BAD HABIT OF FOCUSING MY SIGHT ON ONE POINT TOO MUCH.

What is he doing?
How should I put it...? Maruo's pretty awkward...

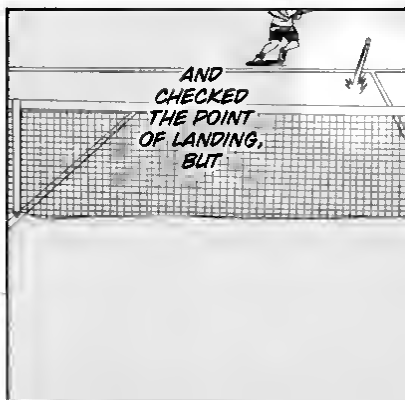
I can't quite imagine how he managed to reach this level after starting tennis at age 15...


LOOKING AT MY AIM,


RUNNING TO THE BALL,


TILL NOW, I'VE BEEN WATCHING THE OPPO-NENT,

EXPAND MY FIELD OF VISION A BIT MORE...

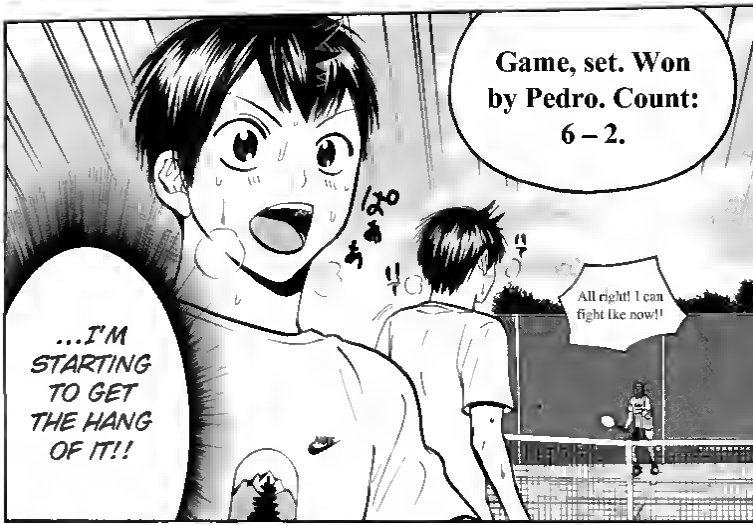

AND CHECKED THE POINT OF LANDING, BUT

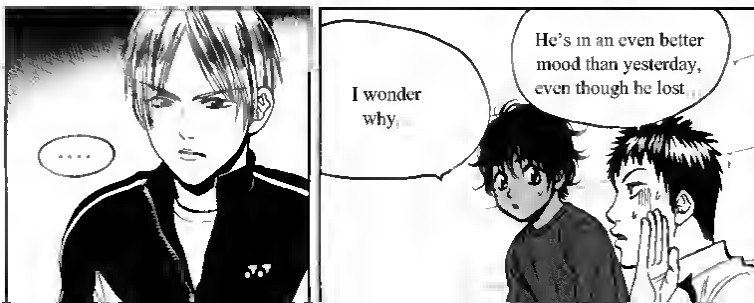
HALF OF MY ATTENTION GOES TO MY AIM...
AND THE OTHER HALF GOES TO MY OPPONENT, AND WHERE I HAVE TO HIT...

DOWN THE LINE...!!
Out!
30 – LOVE

JUST NOW... SINCE I SAW MY OPPONENT'S MOVEMENT, I WAS ABLE TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF MY HIT AT THE LAST MINUTE.
THIS... CAN BE PRETTY EFFECTIVE IF I CAN DO IT RIGHT.
OHH....!?
AND MY CONTROL WASN'T AS OFF AS I EXPECTED.
SINCE MOST OF THE JOB'S ALREADY DONE BY THE TIME I PUT MY PIVOT LEG DOWN,
IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO JUST FOCUS ON THE TARGET AFTER THAT...!!
I... HAVE TO GET MORE USED TO THIS, TOO...
スカ
ALL RIGHT! ONCE MORE!!

EXPAND MY FIELD OF VISION AND CONTROL!!
HEAVY SHOTS AND TWO-STEP ATTACK...


Game, set. Won by Pedro. Count: 6 – 2.
All right! I can fight like now!!
...I'M STARTING TO GET THE HANG OF IT!!


....
I wonder why...
He's in an even better mood than yesterday, even though he lost...

HA
FOR HEAVY SHOTS,
PUT MORE WEIGHT ON MY PIVOT LEG!!
FLORIDA SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD: DAY 3
USING A TWO-STEP TENNIS DIVIDES THE COURT INTO FRONT AND BACK ...
ATTACK FROM THE BASELINE!!
BY CONTROL-LING...
WITH A WIDE FIELD OF VISION!!
#78 FEELING AND OUTCOME

30 – 15
HA
AGAIN I'M FOCUSING TOO MUCH ON THE FRONT...
He's all excited even after missing...
Yeah...
It's like watching a child who just started playing tennis.
BUT... IT'S A POSITIVE MISTAKE THAT CAME FROM TRYING TOO HARD.
I CAN STILL FEEL THAT I'M GETTING BETTER...

HA
アン
HA
ドッ
DAY 4.
パワー

I FINALLY STARTED GETTING USED TO THE HEAVY SHOTS!!
HA
I'M ALSO LEARNING THE TWO-STEP TENNIS MUCH QUICKER THAN I EXPECTED, SINCE IT'S MORE OF A CHANGE IN STRATEGY THAN IMPROVING ON TECHNIQUE.
MY ACCURACY ISN'T INCREASING THAT QUICKLY, BUT BY WIDENING MY FIELD OF VISION, I'M STARTING TO SEE THE POSSIBILITY OF GETTING BETTER!!
ドッ
IF I CAN'T FINISH IT WITH THE FIRST SHOT, GO FOR THE SECOND...
MAKING THE BODY REACT WITHOUT ANY ROOM TO THINK UNDER KILL OR BE KILLED CONDITIONS.
THAT IS MODERN TENNIS!!

Even though I'm focusing more on control than others, I still need power and speed.
Practice, check, play, analyze, and train based on a state-of-the-art training menu...
My Florida Short-term Study Abroad was about to reach the one week turning point.
All right, that's it for today
Go gather up the balls
That's right this year's almost over, huh?
You're right... but it doesn't really feel like it.

HE~~Y, MARUO-KU~N.
AH... IKE-KUN!
GOOD WORK.
I WAS WATCHING YOU SEEM TO BE DOING PRETTY WELL.
MIKE WAS PRAISING YOU TOO. HE SAID YOU'RE IMPROVING REALLY QUICKLY
SAYS YOU'RE A QUICK LEARNER 'CAUSE YOU'RE HONEST AND HARDWORKING.
RE... REALLY? I'M SO GLAD TO HEAR THAT.
SO

WHEN ARE YOU GONNA COME TO MY PLACE?
THAT'S RIGHT...
I FEEL THAT I'M ADAPTING TO THIS TENNIS PRETTY WELL,
BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO WIN EVEN ONCE.
ギク

See ya later~
MOST OF THE PEOPLE HERE ARE EITHER PRO-CANDIDATES OR LOW-RANKING PROS.
EVEN IF I CAN'T GET COMPLETELY USED TO THIS TENNIS, I SHOULDN'T KEEP ON LOSING AGAINST THOSE OPPONENTS.
I HAVE TO WIN AGAINST ARAIYA-KUN WHO'S AIMING TO BE A PRO, OR NABAE-KUN WHO'S ON THE SAME LEVEL AS A PRO, JUST LIKE THE PEOPLE HERE.
IN ORDER TO WIN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR,
I HAVE TO BE ABLE TO WIN EVEN AGAINST ALEX WHO'S A TOP LEVEL PLAYER AMONG THESE PEOPLE...
IN OTHER WORDS,

BEFORE THIS WEEK IS OVER..
I'LL DEFINITELY GET TO YOU!
I'LL BE LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.
OKAY!
IS IKE-KUN THAT BORED?
IS THAT SO?

I WANT TO WIN...

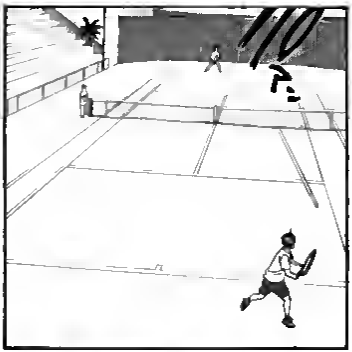
IF I'M REALLY GETTING STRONGER, THEN I WANT TO START SEEING SOME RESULTS NOW

DAY 8
One set match. Maruo to Serve.
I LOST 6-2 LAST TIME, BUT I'M GOING FOR THE WIN THIS TIME
CHRISTOPHER IS A 15 YEAR OLD PRO CANDIDATE. IN JAPAN, I GUESS HE'D BE SOMETHING LIKE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR OR HIGH RANKED KANTOU LEVEL?

I'LL TRY TO BEAT EVERYONE HERE...
FROM THIS POINT ON, IT'S REHEARSAL FOR THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR.
NO...
I'LL DEFI-NITELY WIN!!
DU
Tecnifibre

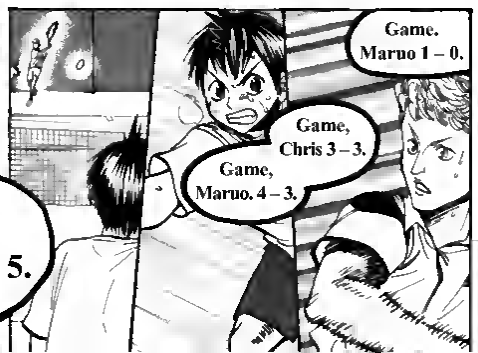
HA
FOR HEAVY BALLS, I'LL...
ATTACK WITH CONTROL RIGHT FROM THE BACK!!

HA
ATHLETICS



He's really gotten a lot better
Oh, it's looking pretty good.

Game, Maruo 5 – 5.


Game. Maruo 1 – 0.
Game, Chris 3 – 3.
Game, Maruo. 4 – 3.

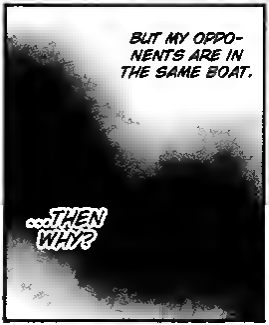
AN OPENING!!
Game, Chris. 6 – 5.
SHIT... I RUSHED TOO MUCH.
HA
BUT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO MATCH HIM EVENLY... NO, BETTER THAN THAT!!
IF I CAN TURN IT AROUND TO A TIE WITH THIS .!!

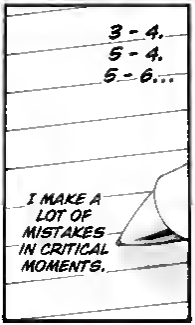
BUT... THAT WAS MY BEST MATCH YET.
NEXT TIME, I CAN DO IT!!
RGH
Game, set. Won by Christopher. Count: 7 – 5.
All right!
DAY 9.
Game, set. Won by Pedro. Count: 7 – 5.
Game, set. Won by Robby. Count: 6 – 4.

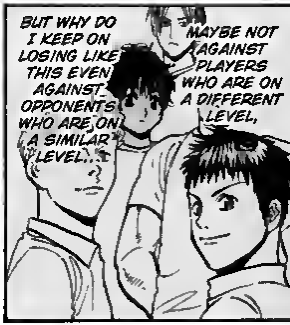
Out!
PHE WA
Game, set.
Won by Atsushi.
Count: 6 – 4.
I'M NOT IN BAD CONDITION... I'VE BEEN ABLE TO PLAY THE WAY I WANT, TOO...
BUT I CAN'T TAKE THE POINT AT CRITICAL MOMENTS...
WITH THIS, IN THE PAST 9 DAYS...
I'VE LOST ALL 27 MATCHES...!!
OREGON
WHY... WHY CAN'T I WIN?!

Is he okay ? He seemed pretty down
Reflecting on his own?
Well, if you keep losing that much, it'd definitely affect you.
Maybe it's the first time for Maruo?
Who knows...? Anyway, this is something he has to overcome by himself.

ドロン
カキ カキ カキ

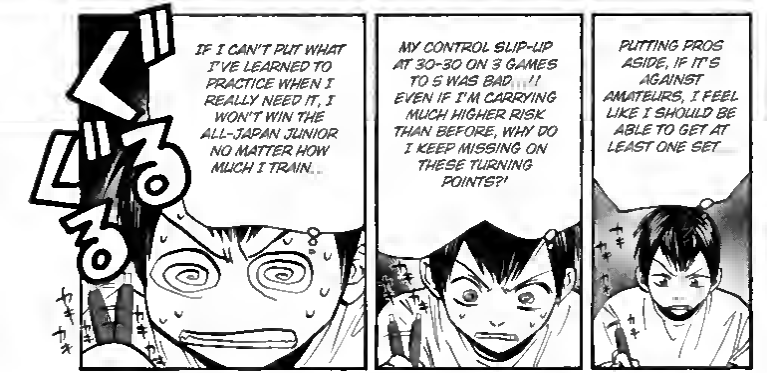

BUT MY OPPONENTS ARE IN THE SAME BOAT.
...THEN WHY?


3 - 4.
5 - 4.
5 - 6...
I MAKE A LOT OF MISTAKES IN CRITICAL MOMENTS.


BUT WHY DO I KEEP ON LOSING LIKE THIS EVEN AGAINST OPPONENTS WHO ARE ON A SIMILAR LEVEL...?
MAYBE NOT AGAINST PLAYERS WHO ARE ON A DIFFERENT LEVEL,

CAN I REALLY WIN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR LIKE THIS...?
ギリ

I EVEN GET SO CLOSE AT TIMES... BUT WHY CAN'T I WIN?!
I'M BECOMING ABLE TO IMPLEMENT THE THINGS I'VE LEARNED.
IN THE 9 DAYS I'VE STAYED IN FLORIDA,
I'VE LOST ALL 27 OF MY MATCHES!!

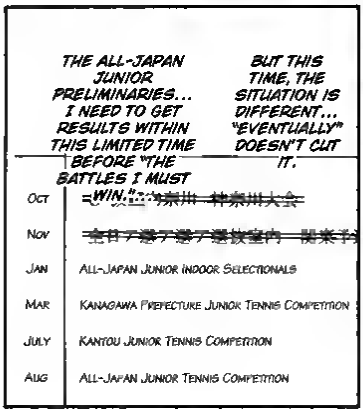

IF I CAN'T PUT WHAT I'VE LEARNED TO PRACTICE WHEN I REALLY NEED IT, I WON'T WIN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR NO MATTER HOW MUCH I TRAIN...
MUMO
MY CONTROL SLIP-UP AT 30-30 ON 3 GAMES TO 5 WAS BAD...!! EVEN IF I'M CARRYING MUCH HIGHER RISK THAN BEFORE, WHY DO I KEEP MISSING ON THESE TURNING POINTS?!
PUTTING PROS ASIDE, IF IT'S AGAINST AMATEURS, I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET AT LEAST ONE SET.

I've been calling you for a while, but...
Yes!?
Maruo!
#79 WALL

Ye…yes.
You want to be a pro, right?
Believe in yourself
Rushing and stressing doesn't change anything
Relax
Stay positive
HE'S CHEERING ME UP USING SIMPLE ENGLISH
You should go to bed early
Thank you. Good night.
…

Believe in yourself····
"BELIEVE IN YOURSELF" HUH...?
HA.


AND I'M NOT REALLY SOMEONE WITH HIGH CONFIDENCE TO BEGIN WITH.
BUT... I'M STRESSING 'CAUSE I CAN'T BELIEVE IN MYSELF ANYMORE.


THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR PRELIMINARIES... I NEED TO GET RESULTS WITHIN THIS LIMITED TIME BEFORE "THE BATTLES I MUST WIN."
BUT THIS TIME, THE SITUATION IS DIFFERENT... "EVENTUALLY" DOESN'T CUT IT.
Oct
Nov
Jan ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR INDOOR SELECTIONALS
Mar KANAGAWA PREFECTURE JUNIOR TENNIS COMPETITION
July KANTOU JUNIOR TENNIS COMPETITION
Aug ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR TENNIS COMPETITION

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, THERE WAS ALSO A TIME WHEN I KEPT LOSING IN THE 3RD ROUND
THAT TIME I WAS ABLE TO MOVE ON BECAUSE I THOUGHT I'D BE ABLE TO SUCCEED EVENTUALLY IF I KEPT ON TRYING...

I...

AM CONFIDENT ABOUT BEING ABLE TO WORK HARDER,

BUT I WAS NEVER CONFIDENT AT DOING THINGS BETTER THAN OTHERS.

NEXT DAY

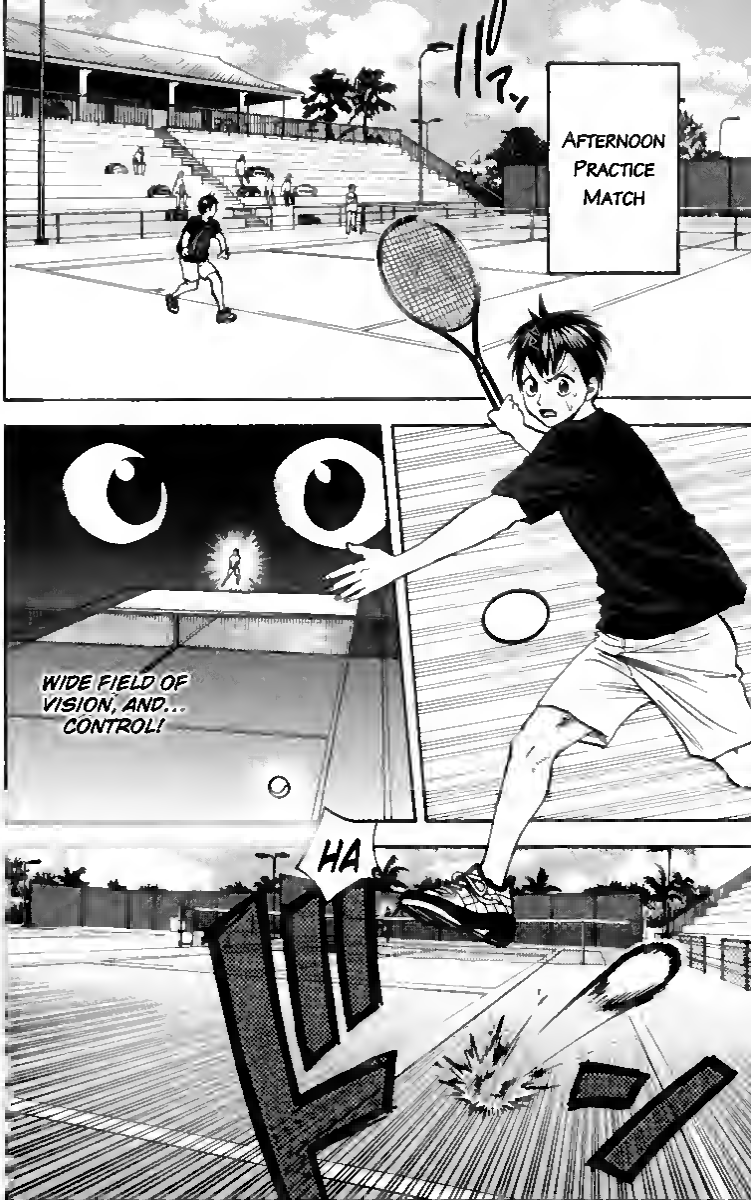
IT DOESN'T FEEL THAT I HAVE THE SAME MOTIVATION OF "S" I HAD ON THE FIRST DAY.
I HAVE A STRONG DESIRE TO TRY HARD IN MY HEAD, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO MY INTUITION. .

| | SCALE: 1~5 |
|---|---|
| AMOUNT OF SLEEP | 5 |
| QUALITY OF SLEEP | 5 |
| AMOUNT OF FOOD | 5 |
| QUALITY OF FOOD | 5 |
| MOTIVATION | 4 |

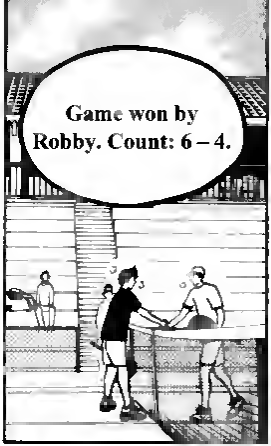
WEIGHT ± −0.1

REMARKS/QUESTIONS

JUST AS YOU SAID, YOUR TENNIS IS DEFINITELY IMPROVING. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT AS THE CHIEF COACH.
IT'S JUST THAT YOU CURRENTLY HAVE A "LOSING HABIT".
WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE CASE?
IT'S PROBABLY... BECAUSE I CAN'T SEEM TO GET THE RESULTS I WANT EVEN THOUGH I FEEL LIKE I'M DOING WELL.
A VICIOUS CYCLE CAUSES YOU TO END UP PUTTING EVEN MORE STRENGTH, AND YOU KEEP LOSING BECAUSE OF IT.
BASICALLY, IT'S WHEN YOU END UP USING TOO MUCH STRENGTH IN THE CRITICAL MOMENTS THAT DETERMINE THE OUTCOME OF THE MATCH.
LOSING HABIT ...?
Okay, then, everyone, gather up on the court.
THIS ISN'T A PROBLEM WITH YOUR TECHNIQUES, BUT A PROBLEM WITH YOUR MENTALITY. YOU SHOULD TALK TO MIKE, THE MENTAL CONDITIONING COACH...THAT'S WHAT HE SAYS.
WHA... WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN THAT HAPPENS?


Afternoon Practice Match
Wide field of vision, and... control!
HA

I ENDED UP GETTING EVEN MORE CONSCIOUS ABOUT IT AND COULDN'T RELAX AT THE CRITICAL MOMENTS.
SHIT... ALL BECAUSE I HEARD ABOUT THIS "LOSING HABIT"...


Game won by Robby. Count: 6 – 4.

Mike should be there, too
Maruo, go to the monitor room while you're on break.

タッタッ

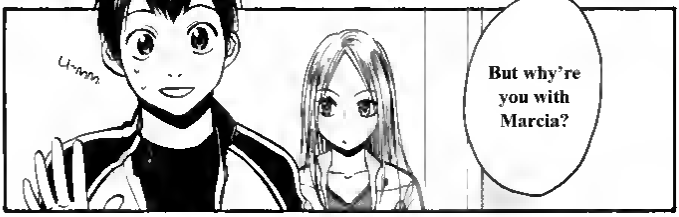
Yes

Is he okay...?

Watch where you're going!
So... sorry...
Eichiro?
Marcia!
Then, bye.
EVEN THOUGH I KNOW I JUST HAVE TO STOP THINKING ABOUT WINNING,
RIGHT NOW, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE...
HONESTLY, I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING OTHER THAN "I WANT TO WIN".
WAH
ヘたり
You're looking gloomy! Man up!
PFFF

Wai wait, are you okay!?
No way, I didn't hit you that hard!
I I'm fine I'm fine!

Hey, Ei-chan I've been waiting!


U-mm
But why're you with Marcia?

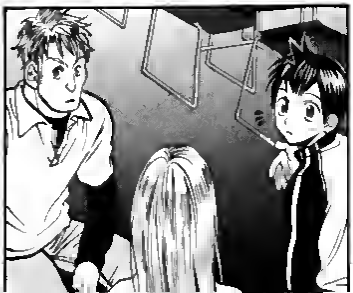
SO I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO BY MYSELF
WHEN I TRY TO RELAX I END UP PUTTING TOO MUCH STRESS ON OTHER PLACES...

THE PROBLEM IS WHAT TO DO WITH THIS "LOSING HABIT" THAT LEADS YOU TO USING TOO MUCH STRENGTH DURING CRITICAL MOMENTS AND RESULTS IN MISTAKES
I HEARD ABOUT IT FROM THE COACH, AND I WATCHED THE MATCH YOU PLAYED JUST NOW

LET'S SEE... BUT BEFORE THAT, EI-CHAN,
KNOW THAT THIS IS A SLUMP THAT MOST PEOPLE WITH A STRONG DESIRE TO WIN HAVE TO GO THROUGH, AND THAT THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT BECAUSE YOUR MOTIVATION IS LACKING.
THE WORST CONDITION IS WHEN YOU DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT WINNING, SO THIS ISN'T THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO.
ALSO, THESE TYPES OF SLUMPS ARE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS. THE SOLUTIONS DIFFER FROM PERSON TO PERSON, AND THERE ISN'T ANY ONE DEFINITIVE ANSWER
SO FIRST, YOU NEED TO GRASP A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THE CAUSE, AND THEN SEARCH FOR YOUR OWN SOLUTION.
THE CAUSE IS PRETTY CLEAR... IN ORDER TO ADAPT TO THE NEW TENNIS IN THIS PLACE, YOU'VE BEEN LEARNING IT DURING YOUR MATCHES WITHOUT CONCERN FOR WINNING.
THANKS TO THAT, YOU ADAPTED TO THIS TENNIS QUICKLY. BUT AS A PRICE, YOU HAVE SUBCONSCIOUSLY BEEN LOSING CONFIDENCE DUE TO THE CONSTANT LOSSES
WHEN YOUR MIND TOLD YOU TO WIN, YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS HAD ALREADY LOST CONFIDENCE AND COULDN'T RECOVER. THAT'S THE CAUSE OF YOUR LOSING HABIT.
THAT MEANS... USING MY OWN METHODS ...
I HAVE TO RECOVER MY NATURAL CONFIDENCE, RIGHT?
YUP... IN OTHER WORDS, MAKE YOU BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.

He s been on a losing streak ever since he became a pro and the outcome of the matches became his livelihood

He's probably feeling a lot of pressure since I don't have anyone else to rely on, and he has to support the family, too



I'D HEARD THAT HE'S HAVING A HARD TIME, BUT I THOUGHT HE STILL HAD SOME ROOM TO RELAX...
EVEN ALEX... WAS FEELING PUSHED TO THE EDGE...
THAT'S WHAT SHE SAYS.
I'M PLAYING WITH THE SOLE INTENTION OF BECOMING A PRO.
BUT AFTER BECOMING A PRO...
AND TENNIS BECOMES MY DAILY LIFE.
IF I KEEP ON LOSING LIKE THIS.
CAN I STILL SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
Believe in yourself
But it's the same for everyone here.
Alex is... amazing.

In the professional world, even if you don't lose, you're a goner if you can no longer believe in yourself...
But those are the hurdles that test whether you can really live as a pro or not.
but all of them have moments when they keep on losing...
Just like Eichiro, they want to win in order to be pros,
Well, well... They all have their reasons!
In the first place, you're still an amateur just like me Don't be so depressed!!
...Brother scolds me with that quite often...
SNIFF
THAT'S WHY THERE'S THIS NICE SAYING IN AMERICA
THE ONLY THING LEFT FOR ME TO DO IS TO REFRAIN FROM ASKING YOU TO "TRY HARDER" WHEN YOU'RE ALREADY TRYING SO HARD
...A-...ANYWAY, THAT'S ALL I CAN TELL YOU FOR NOW

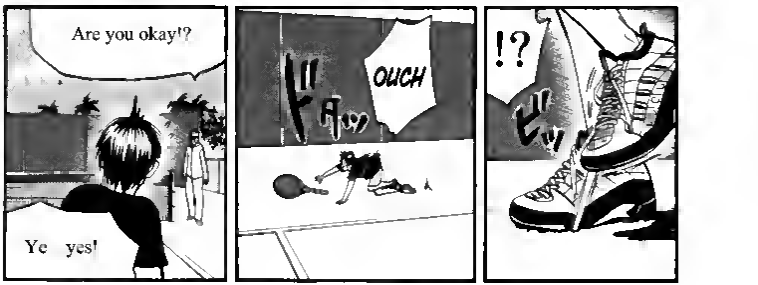
Good luck!!
I PRAY FOR YOUR GOOD FORTUNE!

SO ALL THAT'S LEFT IS LUCK...!?

YES. SOME-HOW.
OH, YOU THERE. YOU OKAY--?
One set match. Pedro to serve!
Maruo, can you play a match right now?
Ah...Yes!
NOW, WHAT SHOULD I DO TO REGAIN MY NATURAL CONFIDENCE?
BUT... THANKS TO MIKE, I UNDERSTAND THE CAUSE.

HA

SHIT
EVEN THOUGH IT'S JUST THE FIRST HALF, I'VE ALREADY STARTED STRESSING.
Out.
Game, Pedro.
2-0


Are you okay!?
Ye yes!
OUCH
!?

I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE MY SHOE LACES WERE LOOSE... FORGET ABOUT RECOVERING MY CONFIDENCE, I'M NOT EVEN LOOKING AT MYSELF
tight
MY RACKET IS MESSED UP, TOO.
SUCH BAD FORM RIGHT FROM THE START... THIS IS MY WORST CONDITION YET!!
GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF!!
IF IT DOESN'T WORK NO MATTER WHAT I TRY, ALL THAT'S LEFT IS LUCK!!
Are you done?
Ah... yes!
ARGH

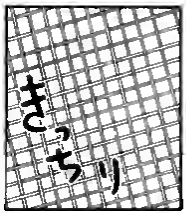
LOVE – 15
HUH... THAT WAS PRETTY GOOD!?
!!
WHY!?
.....

#80 SAME
LOVE – 15
JUST NOW IT WAS PRETTY GOOD FOR SOME REASON
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
I GOT CAUGHT ON MY SHOE-LACES AND FELL..
THE STRINGS ON MY RACKET WERE MESSED UP, TOO.
I HAD TO RUSH THE RETURN WITHOUT ANY PLAN.

I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING BETTER, SO
GUESS I'LL TRY DOING THE SAME THING AGAIN...
BUT IT'S TRUE THAT I WAS ABLE TO ESCAPE MY WORST CONDITION, EVEN FOR A MOMENT.

NOT ONLY WAS I IN BAD SHAPE...
I WAS PRETTY MUCH RELYING ON LUCK.
A FLUKE?

AND TAKE A DEEP BREATH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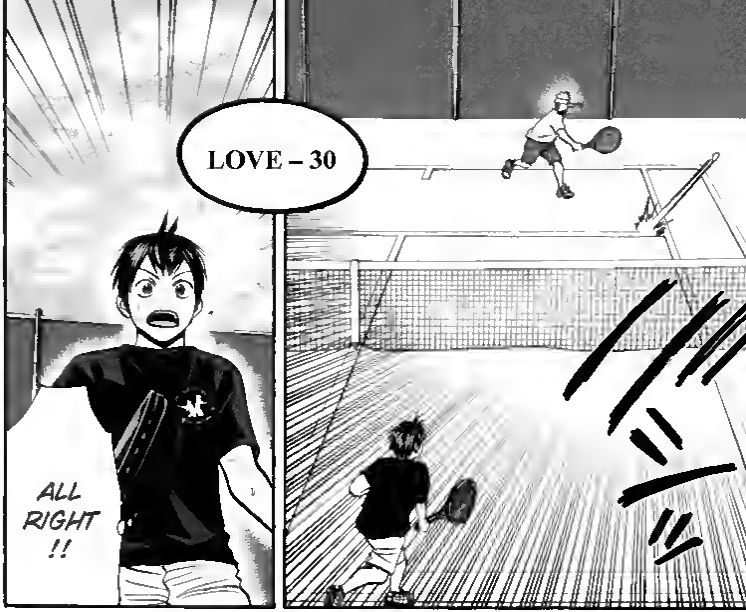
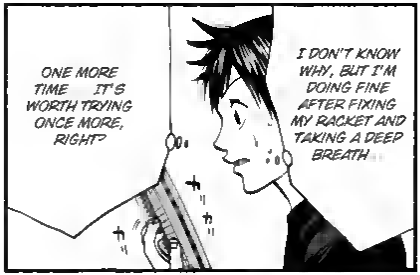
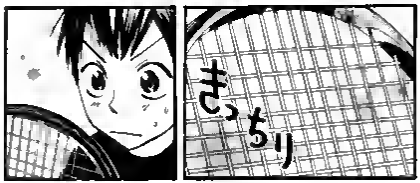
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO FIX MY SHOE-LACES,
SO FIRST, FIX MY RACKET
...

HA

HA
HA
THAT WAS A GOOD RETURN!!
IT'S WEAK!
I'LL FINISH IT WITH TWO-STEP TENNIS!!
HERE...


LOVE – 30
ALL RIGHT !!

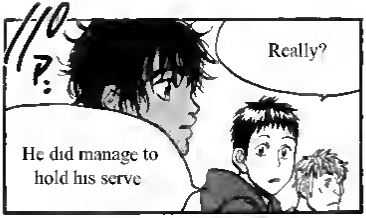

ONE MORE TIME IT'S WORTH TRYING ONCE MORE, RIGHT?
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I'M DOING FINE AFTER FIXING MY RACKET AND TAKING A DEEP BREATH

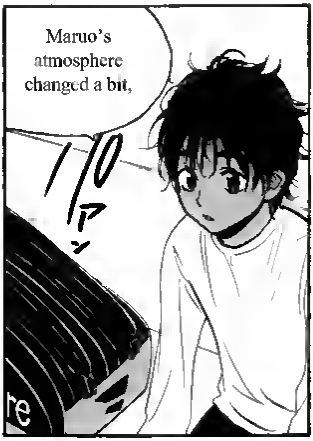

きっちり

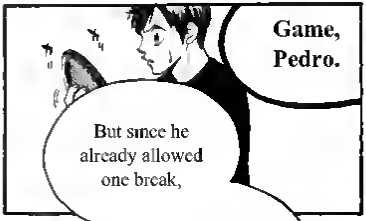
I DIDN'T MAKE A MISTAKE EVEN THOUGH I ATTACKED!!
I DIDN'T PUT ANY UNNECESSARY STRESS ON IT!!

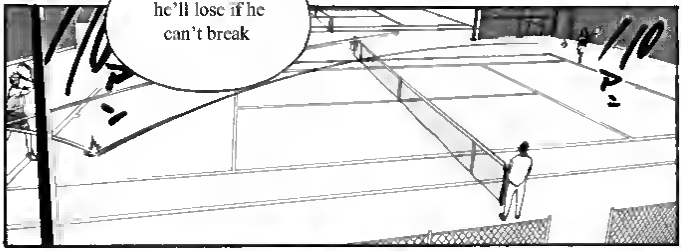
ALL RIGHT!!
15 – LOVE
15 – 15
DUNLOP
HA
CRAP... I AM GETTING BETTER, BUT I STILL COULDN'T BREAK.
Game, Pedro.
3 – 0

HA
HA
Game, Maruo.
3 – 1.
ANYWAY, I MANAGED TO HOLD MY SERVE FOR NOW!!
SHIT
15 – LOVE
30 – 15


Really?
He did manage to hold his serve


Maruo's atmosphere changed a bit,

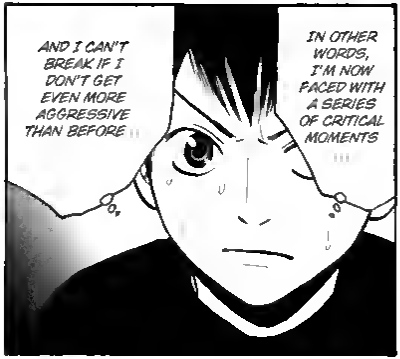

Game, Pedro.
But since he already allowed one break,
he'll lose if he can't break

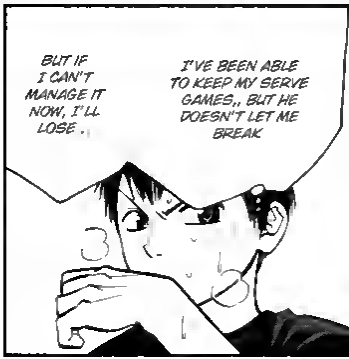


Game, Pedro.
5 – 2

Game, Maruo.
4 – 2

Game, Maruo.
5 – 3


AND I CAN'T BREAK IF I DON'T GET EVEN MORE AGGRESSIVE THAN BEFORE
IN OTHER WORDS, I'M NOW FACED WITH A SERIES OF CRITICAL MOMENTS


BUT IF I CAN'T MANAGE IT NOW, I'LL LOSE..
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP MY SERVE GAMES,, BUT HE DOESN'T LET ME BREAK

PLEASE !!
IF I CAN PLAY PROPER OFFENSIVE TENNIS...
"FIX THE RACKET AND TAKE A DEEP BREATH"... IT SORT OF FEELS LIKE A PRAYER, BUT...
I see! It's a routine.
Routine...?
He's been unusually concerned about his racket.
I wonder what's wrong...

ALWAYS BOUNCING THE BALL THE SAME WAY
WITH ROUTINES, BY REPEATING THE SAME MOVEMENT EVERY TIME, PLAYERS CAN MAINTAIN A CONSTANT MENTAL AND PHYSICAL STATE.
FOR EXAMPLE, ACTIONS PLAYERS TAKE BEFORE A SERVE
YUP. THAT.
YOU MEAN REPEATING THE SAME MOVEMENT EVERY TIME,
LIKE A BASEBALL PLAYER TAKING SWINGS BEFORE THE PITCH?
30 – 30
ALTHOUGH IT'S SMALL, THIS IS SOMETHING PRETTY EFFECTIVE FOR HIM RIGHT NOW
BUT MAYBE HE MANAGED TO FIND HIS OWN ROUTINE WHEN HE FELL DOWN EARLIER
SINCE HE'S A HARD WORKER AND WANTS TO WIN NO MATTER WHAT RIGHT NOW, HE HAS A TENDENCY TO RUSH FOR POINTS
YOU'RE RIGHT... HE'S LITERALLY "SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T FALL EASILY"
SEEMS LIKE IT WAS LUCKY FOR HIM TO FALL
THAT'S NOT ALL
NORMALLY, CAN YOU COME UP WITH A NEW IDEA JUST BY FALLING?

30 - 30... THE MOST CRUCIAL POINT!!
1/64 !!

ドゥン
30 – 40
IT... IT WENT IN!!

HA
HA
ONCE I'M IN THE LEAD, I HAVE MORE ROOM TO RELAX THAN BEFORE
HA
I CAN DO IT!!

Game Maruo.
5 – 4
BREAK!!


KEEPING MY MIND CLEAR AND FORGETTING ABOUT STRATEGY... AND MY MOVEMENTS
I WANT TO KEEP THIS UP...
IN THIS MATCH, AS LONG AS I CAN PLAY THE SAME AS IN PRACTICE, EVEN RISKY ATTACKS CAN SOMEHOW WORK.
ALL RIGHT... AS LONG AS I DON'T PUT TOO MUCH STRESS, I CAN BREAK.

WHAT MATTERS RIGHT NOW ISN'T TRYING HARD TO WIN...
Game, Maruo.
5 – 5

IT'S PLAYING WHILE APPLYING WHAT I'VE LEARNED TILL NOW...
JUST LIKE THE USUAL,
AND BELIEVING IN MYSELF!!
Game, Maruo. 6 – 5
Maruo took the game again!!
UNLOP

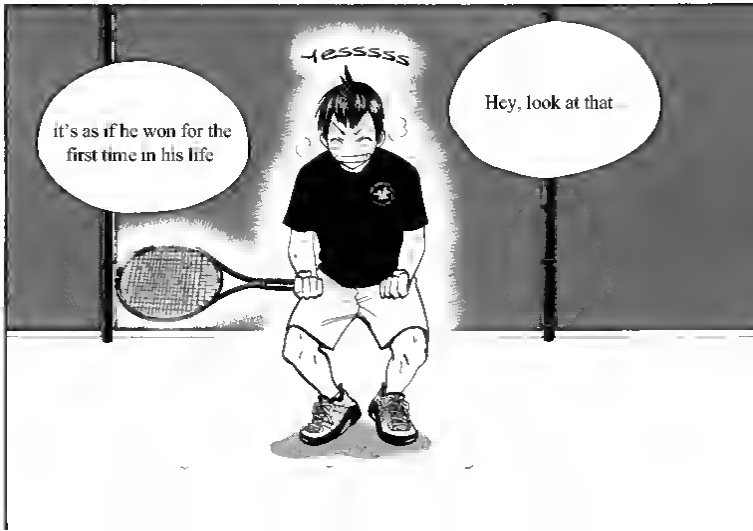
DUNLOP
HA

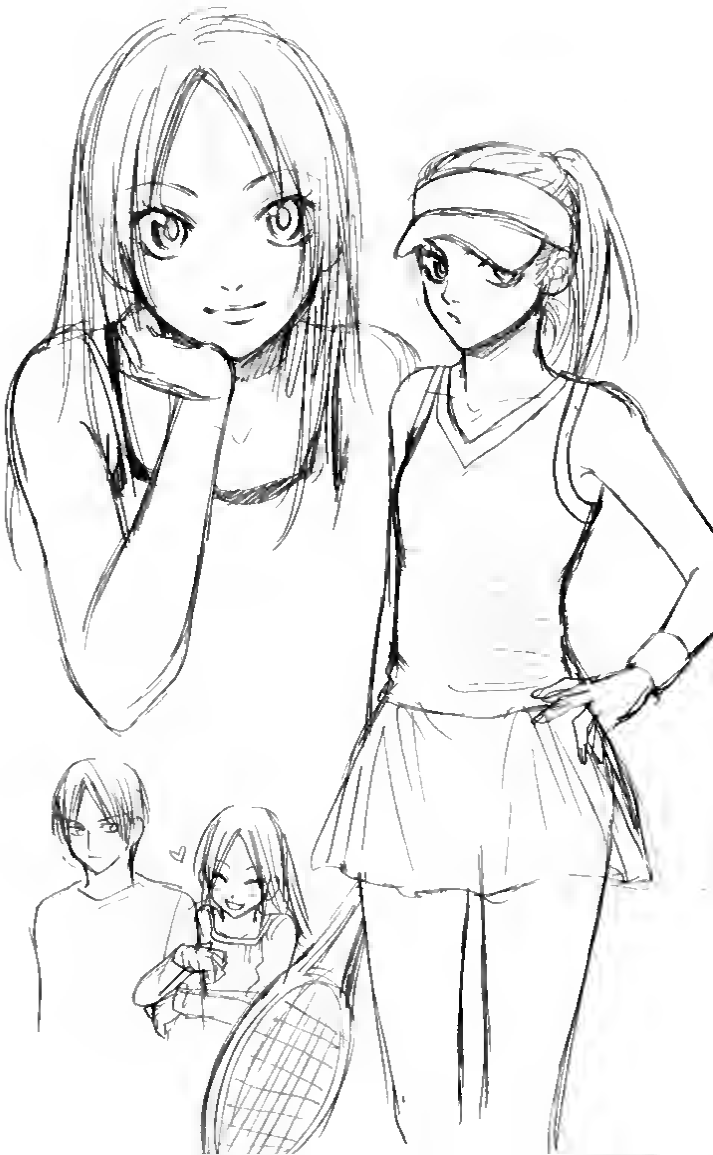
Game, set,
Won by Maruo.
Count: 7 – 5
FINALLY...
I
FINALLY
WON!!

Shit!!

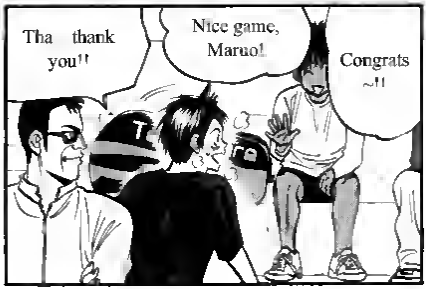
EI-CHAN, NICE GAME!!

He finally reached the starting line.


it's as if he won for the first time in his life
YESSSSS
Hey, look at that



Baby Steps



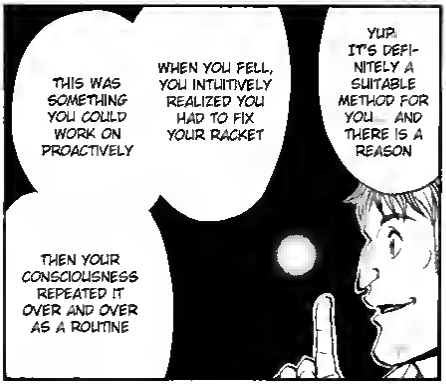
He suddenly started making very few mistakes and was going for my weak points
Even though I wasn't losing in power or technique

## #81 WANT TO KNOW

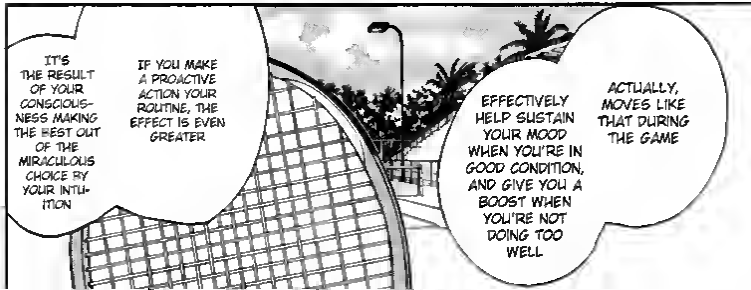
"FIX THE RACKET AND TAKE A DEEP BREATH BEFORE PLAYING"... YOU STARTED GETTING BETTER AFTER THAT
MIKE!

AH, THAT'S RIGHT

I SHOULD WRITE THEM DOWN BEFORE I FORGET


THIS WAS SOMETHING YOU COULD WORK ON PROACTIVELY
WHEN YOU FELL, YOU INTUITIVELY REALIZED YOU HAD TO FIX YOUR RACKET
YUP. IT'S DEFINITELY A SUITABLE METHOD FOR YOU... AND THERE IS A REASON
THEN YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS REPEATED IT OVER AND OVER AS A ROUTINE

YEAH!! I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHY, BUT THAT REALLY HELPED A COUPLE OF TIMES
AND YOU SAID EVERYONE HAS A DIFFERENT WAY OF GETTING OVER A SLUMP


IT'S THE RESULT OF YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS MAKING THE BEST OUT OF THE MIRACULOUS CHOICE BY YOUR INTUITION
IF YOU MAKE A PROACTIVE ACTION YOUR ROUTINE, THE EFFECT IS EVEN GREATER
EFFECTIVELY HELP SUSTAIN YOUR MOOD WHEN YOU'RE IN GOOD CONDITION, AND GIVE YOU A BOOST WHEN YOU'RE NOT DOING TOO WELL
ACTUALLY, MOVES LIKE THAT DURING THE GAME

...ALTHOUGH I WAS JUST DESPERATE...
I TOLD YOU IT'S GOOD TO BELIEVE IN YOURSELF, RIGHT?
HA HA HA
YOUR INTUITION MADE THE GREATEST CHOICE FOR WINNING
OH? WHAT'S THIS?
PEDRO HITS GREAT STROKES OFF THE FOREHAND, BUT LACKS VARIATION....
NGRGH
What? Is it something about me!?
Wah wah wah.... Stop!! STOOOOOOP!!

Pedro
Right-handed. Double-handed backhand
Baseliner

Overall Characteristics
Has good and power more or less a forehand-centred attacker. Has powerful strokes but not much variety
Since he doesn't come to the net often, he doesn't flap moving up and down much?

Shot Characteristics
Topic : Basic
Although they're both usually normal shots with average spin, quite powerful.
Good forehand strokes.
In retrospect, lots of misses from the backhand.
Serve
First serve is always flat with good power. A lot of them aim for the center and are highly accurate.
Second serve has strong spin that takes loses.

Strategy
Given the chance, take the risk and try crossing a deep shot ①
If he returns a low ball with the forehand hitting a deep ball toward his backhand is effective. ②
Basically, concentrate on hitting balls to his backhand.
In his second serve beware of the spin, and try to hit to his backhand side as much as possible.
In critical moments his first serve goes mostly to the center

① Pedro
② Pedro

Christopher
Right-handed. Double-handed backhand
All rounder

Overall Characteristics
His power and speed are average. Quite stable and his ba

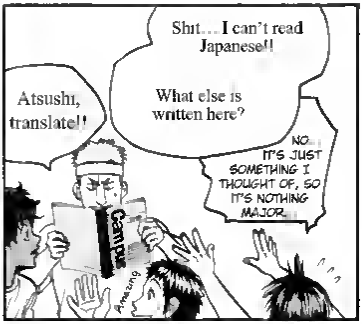
Shot Characteristics
Backhand
Lots of spin and flat. Both are quite powerful. Their
Forehand
Most of it is natural spin more or less a
Serve
First serve is 2. 8 ratio of Flat: Slice
Hits flat shots aiming for the center 70% of the
Slice is a wide center and its control is
His second service is quite consistent but its powe

Strategy
Make him hit forehands down the line as much
When hitting to his backhand, try not to hit
For flat services aimed at the center try to
For his second serve, try to move to the fore
Try to go to his forehand side for approachin

① Christopher

Pedro apparently, a deep ball to your backhand after letting you hit a ball low is quite effective on you
WHAT!?
WAI...WAIT. ATSUTSHI-SAN, DON'T READ IT IN FRONT OF HIM~~!!
So detailed~

...SO ALL HIS WORK
FINALLY BARED FRUIT..


Shit... I can't read Japanese!!
Atsushi, translate!!
What else is written here?
NO, IT'S JUST SOMETHING I THOUGHT OF, SO IT'S NOTHING MAJOR...
Campus
Amazing

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, HE KEPT ON DOING A LOT OF STUFF

You can finally play Souji

Hey, Maruo!

What does it say about me?
Show mine too
STOP !

I... I WANT TO CHALLENGE HIM ONCE I MAKE THIS MY OWN!!
He says he wants to practice a bit more before going
Sounds good
THAT'S RIGHT.. SINCE I WON ONCE, I CAN FIGHT IKE-KUN NOW...!!
Thanks, Alex
"Believe in yourself" very important
AFTER THAT, I FOUGHT CHRISTOPHER,
AND WON 7-5!!

I MIGHT'VE OVERCOME THE "LOSING HABIT" SOMEHOW...
SO IT SHOULD BE OKAY TO BELIEVE THAT I'VE GOTTEN STRONGER...
I FINALLY WON!!
OH!? FINALLY.
AA~
IKE-KU~N!!
SO. WHEN CAN WE HAVE A MATCH?

I'LL ASK THE COACH TO MAKE SURE,
SINCE HE'S COMING FOR TONIGHT'S PARTY, TOO
YOU DON'T MIND WAKING UP AT FOUR IN THE MORNING?
LET'S SEE IT'S TOO LATE FOR TODAY
HOW ABOUT TOMORROW BEFORE BREAKFAST?
OF COURSE, I'M FINE WITH IT...
PARTY?
HUH? YOU DIDN'T KNOW?
1
2
3

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!
THAT'S RIGHT.
IT'S ALREADY THE NEW YEAR.
HEY, HEY. DID YOU SERIOUSLY FORGET?
IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE THE NEW YEAR AT ALL.
PEOPLE HERE USUALLY CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT HOME WITH FAMILY.
BUT FOR NEW YEAR, WE CELEBRATE LIKE THIS.

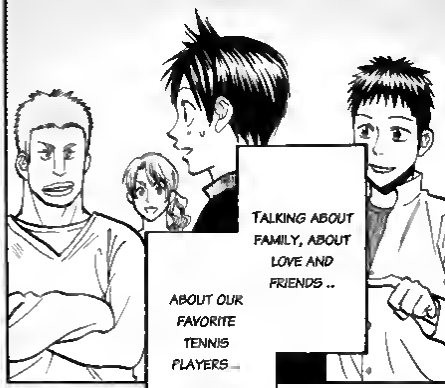
Ah~ Eichiro!!
I heard you finally won today.
Ah, Marcia and Alex
Thank you, Marcia
Ehem
It's all thanks to me~
Yeah, yeah
What time do you think it is?
Not fair~~~
You get to have all the fun~~
?
Geez!! Stop treating me like a kid, already!!
Hey... Once you finish that, go back and sleep
Eh~~!?
I just got here~~~~!?

TOO BAD FOR HER, BUT MARCIA IS STILL THIRTEEN, SO...
THIR-TEEN!?
THAT MEANS..., IN JAPAN, SHE'D BE IN 1ST YEAR OF MIDDLE SCHOOL...?
What...?
I THOUGHT SHE WAS THE SAME AGE AS ME
Why're you staring at me like that!?

ANYWAY, SOMETHING'S BEEN TICKLING MY CURIOSITY FOR A WHILE
HOW ARE THINGS WITH NATSU?
WHA... WHAT DO YOU MEAN, HOW...? WHY SO SUDDEN...?
MARUO-KUN! HE SAYS IT'S OKAY TO PLAY TOMORROW MORNING!
AH, IKE-KUN
ガヴ
ガヴ
THAT'S RIGHT, IKE-KUN'S NACCHAN'S CHILDHOOD FRIEND, RIGHT?
YUP
HMMM?
HOW SHOULD I SAY IT, UMM...
WE... WE'RE FRIENDS
ALTHOUGH I'M HER FIANCE, TOO

AHAHA
HAHAHA
HAHAHA
IS THAT REAL? A JOKE?
WHICH IS IT?
YUP! I WAS EXPECTING THAT SORT OF REACTION!!
Hey! What was that about?
It's about Maruo's girlfriend
Ehhhhh!? Eichiro has a girlfriend?!
S...SORRY... IT'S A JOKE... I'M TELLING YOU, IT'S A JOKE!! Forgive me!
IT'S... IT'S JUST A JOKE...
IT'S SCARY WHEN AN HONEST GUY GETS MAD
THANKS TO MIKE, IKE-KUN, AND ATSUSHI-SAN'S HELP, I WAS ABLE TO TALK TO A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT NIGHT.

NEXT MORNING, 5:00. ON THE COURT


TALKING ABOUT FAMILY, ABOUT LOVE AND FRIENDS ..
ABOUT OUR FAVORITE TENNIS PLAYERS...

ABOUT THE FUTURE OF TENNIS...
IN THE END, WE WRAPPED UP WITH TENNIS TALK....

AND FINALLY...

HEY
STOOD MY VERY FIRST OPPONENT OF THE YEAR.
GOOD MORNING.

DID YOU HAVE FUN YESTERDAY?
YEAH, SOMEHOW
BUT I DO WISH I COULD SPEAK MORE ENGLISH

IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, YOU'VE HAD A LOT OF FUN STAYING HERE
EVERY DAY GOES BY REALLY QUICKLY
I THINK I'VE NEVER HAD A WINTER BREAK THAT FELT SO SHORT

ALTHOUGH AT TIMES I GOT STRESSED AND WASN'T HAVING FUN,
IT WAS MY FIRST TIME STRESSING ABOUT TENNIS LIKE THAT.

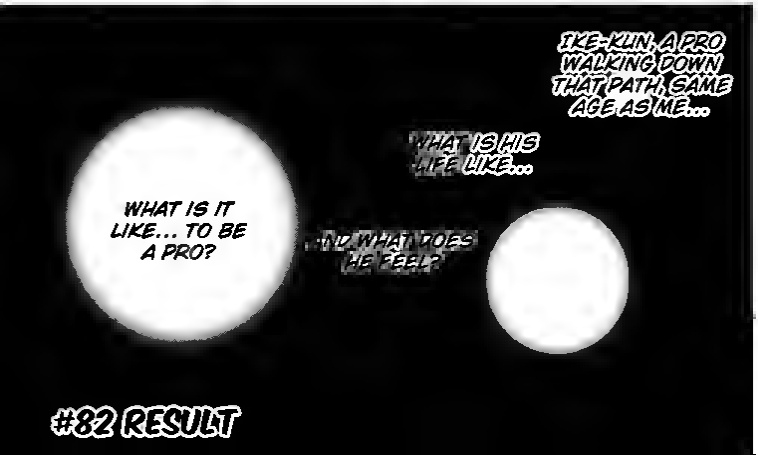
WITH ALL THOSE EXPERIENCES,
TENNIS GOT A LOT MORE FUN.
WEST POINT
81
THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME, SO A ONE SET MATCH
OKAY
THAT'S GOOD.
I'M REALLY GLAD I CAME HERE.
HEY, IKE-KUN

WHAT'S IT LIKE...
TO BE A PRO?
WEST POINT
81
OREGON
THAT'S QUITE A BROAD QUESTION
AH... NO, I WAS JUST WONDERING IF THINGS LIKE TENNIS, LIFE, OR FEELINGS CHANGE...
Blush
Grin
WANT ME TO TEACH YOU?

FROM THE MOMENT I FIRST HELD A RACKET UP UNTIL TODAY,
TENNIS HAS BEEN SO MUCH FUN.
I WANTED THE FUN TO LAST FOREVER.
SO I WISHED TO BECOME A PRO...

BUT AT THE SAME TIME,
I'M SURE THERE ARE MORE JOYS TO COME!
UNLIKE ANYTHING I'VE EVER TASTED.

BUT AFTER COMING HERE AND MEETING VARIOUS PEOPLE,
I LEARNED THAT IT'S NOT ALWAYS FUN! AND THAT THERE ARE THINGS I STILL DON'T KNOW.
Believe in yourself


IKE-KUN, A PRO WALKING DOWN THAT PATH, SAME AGE AS ME...
WHAT IS HIS LIFE LIKE...
AND WHAT DOES HE FEEL?
WHAT IS IT LIKE... TO BE A PRO?
#82 RESULT

!

WANT ME TO TEACH YOU?

THEN... IF YOU BEAT ME.

にや?

'CAUSE IF I DO, IT'S LIKE I'M ALREADY ADMITTING DEFEAT!!
BUT I ABSOLUTELY HATE THINKING IT'S IMPOSS-IBLE

WHA
WHAT A BULLY.
DOES HE EVEN THINK I CAN BEAT HIM?
81

OK !
F...FINE!! THEN LET'S DO IT.

I HAD A 10 MINUTE MATCH WITH IKE-KUN BEFORE, AT STC.
BUT IT'S MY FIRST TIME PLAYING A FULL SET AGAINST HIM.
THAT TIME, ALL I COULD DO WAS SOMEHOW EARN ONE POINT.

COME!!

ドキ
ドキ
ドキ
THERE ARE ALSO THINGS I PICKED UP FROM HERE, SO IT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM LAST TIME!!
AFTER THAT... I WENT THROUGH BODY TRANS-FORMATION, AND EVEN FOUGHT NABAE-KUN.

I BARELY GOT MY RACKET ON IT!!
....GO IN!!
!!
HA
RGH
HI
AH
...BUT IF IT'S IKE-KUN, HE'LL RETURN IT!!
IT HIT THE NET!!

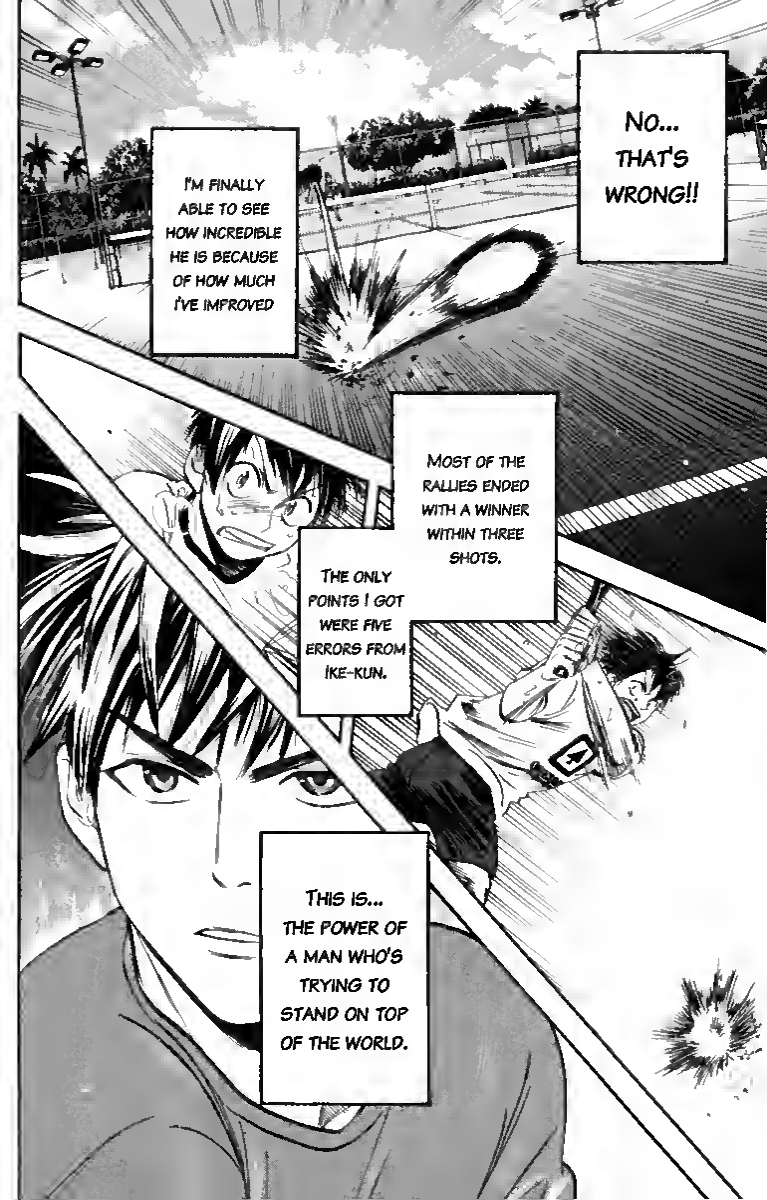
カッ
OREGON

LOB!?
...R... REACH IT!!
NO... I'LL DEFI-NITELY REACH
AND FINISH!!
81

ALL RIGHT! 15 - LOVE
HE... HE GOT BOTH THE NET BALL AND THE SMASH
AND THEN GOT THE WINNER!!
YEA
ビュッ

WHERE AND HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO HIT THE BALL?!
...THEN... WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO TO GET A POINT!?
BUT HE WENT FOR THE KILL, TOO!!
AND THE BEST SHOT I CAN HIT ON COURT...
NOT ONLY DID HE JUST REACH MY LUCKIEST SHOT...
WHAT BEGAN AFTER THAT
WAS AN UNBELIEVABLY ONE-SIDED BATTLE!!

I THOUGHT HE WAS AMAZING BEFORE, BUT IT'S EVEN MORE THAN THAT!!
SINCE I'M A MUCH WEAKER OPPONENT,
HE PLAYS REALLY OFFENSIVELY AND DOESN'T HESITATE TO TAKE RISKS.
NO MATTER WHERE I HIT, A MOMENT LATER I'M FACING A KILLER SHOT PLUNGING DOWN ON ME.
WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL MY HARD WORK SINCE THAT DAY?


NO... THAT'S WRONG!!
I'M FINALLY ABLE TO SEE HOW INCREDIBLE HE IS BECAUSE OF HOW MUCH I'VE IMPROVED
MOST OF THE RALLIES ENDED WITH A WINNER WITHIN THREE SHOTS.
THE ONLY POINTS I GOT WERE FIVE ERRORS FROM IKE-KUN.
THIS IS... THE POWER OF A MAN WHO'S TRYING TO STAND ON TOP OF THE WORLD.

81
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO WITNESS THE WORLD OF TOP LEVEL PROS
UP-CLOSE, WITH MY OWN EYES.

ALL RIGHT, 6 - 0. MY WIN!
YOUR LEGS ARE ABOUT TO GIVE OUT
SHI... SHIT...
81
HE... HE'S TOO STRONG.

"YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU BEAT ME", RIGHT?
"I'LL TELL YOU IF YOU BEAT ME" MEANS,
THEN... IF YOU BEAT ME.
BUT WAS THAT THE ANSWER?
YOU KNOW... I WANTED TO HEAR "WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A PRO",
OREGON

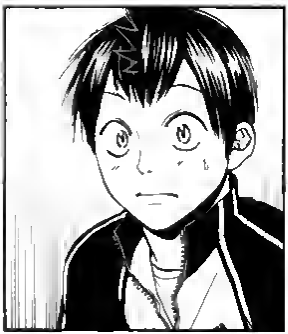
IKE-KUN HAS IKE-KUN'S, ALEX HAS ALEX'S TO EACH HIS OWN PROFESSIONAL WORLD.
AND IT'S SOMETHING ONLY THE ONE WHO MANAGED TO BECOME A PRO CAN UNDERSTAND.
81
SO YOU'RE TELLING ME TO BECOME A PRO AND FEEL IT FOR MYSELF, RIGHT?
I TOLD YOU ALREADY. I'LL I'LL ONLY TELL YOU IF YOU BEAT ME.
THEN SEE YA.

AH~~~~
I WANT TO GET STRONGER!
EVEN MORE.
OREGON
YUP
OH... YOU GOT OWNED ALREADY?

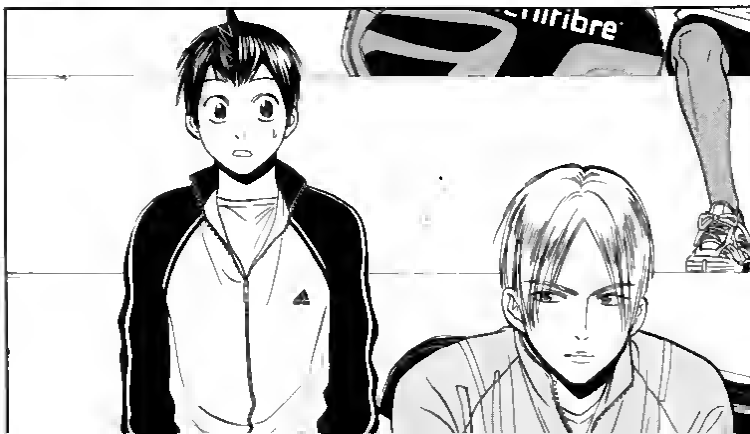
IT'S GOOD THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO PLAY HIM BEFORE LEAVING.
IT'S BEEN ALMOST TWO WEEKS SINCE I CAME HERE...
THAT'S RIGHT...
It's a good experience.
Thank you
You shouldn't think too much about it
That's right. No one can beat him right now.
prince
TODAY'S PROBABLY MY LAST DAY OF PRACTICE MATCHES HERE.
TOMORROW IS THE LAST DAY OF MY FLORIDA SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD
LIKE THAT, IT'S ALREADY THE 13TH DAY.
!
Alex... why don't you try playing Maruo?
All right! The competition is coming up, so we'll do three set matches today.

HE REFUSED ON THE FIRST DAY BECAUSE "HE WANTS TO PLAY AGAINST A PRO LIKE HIM"...
and he forget?
THERE'S NO WAY HE'LL AGREE TO A 3 SET MATCH IF IKE-KUN ISN'T INVOLVED...

THAT'S GREAT FOR ME, BUT...
...PLAY ALEX?



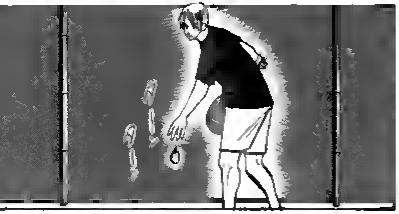
OK !


Carbofibre

HE ACCEPTED... EVEN THOUGH IT'S A 3 SET MATCH?
HUH ...?
OK !
OR MAYBE... IT'S BECAUSE THIS IS THE LAST TIME HE'LL GET TO PLAY ME?
DID HE ACKNOWLEDGE ME A LITTLE?
YONEX
DUNLOP
I WANT TO WIN.
I'VE PAINFULLY LEARNED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OUTCOME DURING THESE PAST TWO WEEKS.
NO. THAT'S NOT WHAT'S IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW.
WHETHER I'M A WORTHY OPPONENT FOR ALEX OR NOT DEPENDS ON THE OUTCOME....

#83 13 DAYS

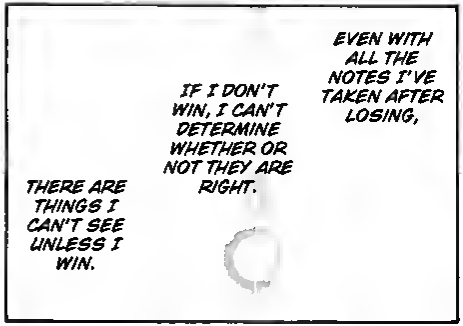
You never know... Maruo's been getting pretty good.
It's definitely going to be Alex.



THESE PAST TWO WEEKS, WHEN SERVING FROM THE DEUCE COURT,
DEUCE COURT
WIDE 80% (SLICE)
CENTER 5% (FLAT SPIN)
MORE THAN 60% OF ALEX'S SERVES WERE WIDE SLICES,
AND THE REST WERE MOSTLY FLAT OR SPINNING TOWARDS THE CENTER.
AFTER A KICK SERVE, HE'D OFTEN FOLLOW IT TO THE NET

Three set match.
Alex to Serve!!

I'VE BEEN THINKING TOO FAR AHEAD AND RUSHING FOR THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR...
BUT RIGHT NOW, I WANT TO WIN THIS MATCH IN FRONT OF ME.


EVEN WITH ALL THE NOTES I'VE TAKEN AFTER LOSING,
IF I DON'T WIN, I CAN'T DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE RIGHT.
THERE ARE THINGS I CAN'T SEE UNLESS I WIN.

WILL LOOK TOTALLY DIFFERENT DEPENDING ON WHETHER OR NOT I WIN AGAINST ALEX HERE TODAY!!
EVEN THE EVENTS THREE MONTHS FROM NOW...

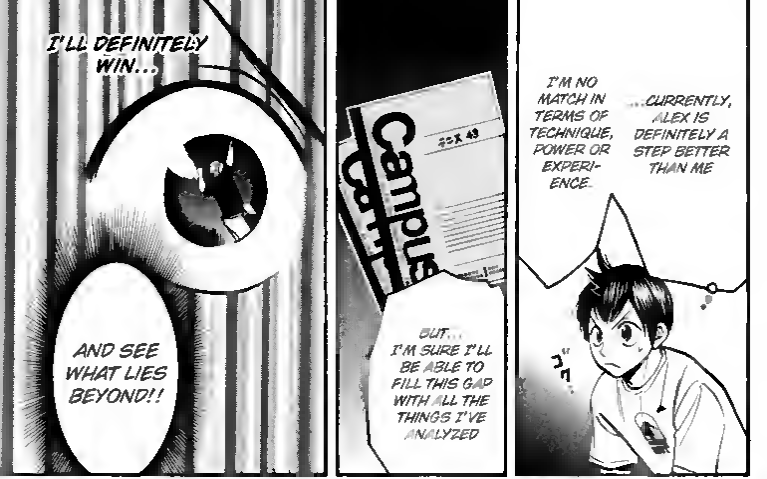
BY MAKING FULL USE OF ALL THE DATA I'VE ACCUMULATED HERE...
A KICKER DOWN THE MIDDLE!!
I'LL WIN!!
...THAT MEANS HE'LL MOVE UP!!
IF THAT'S THE CASE, BEFORE ALEX COMES FORWARD, HIT THE BALL ON THE RISE...

110マン
RGH
HA
HEAVY.
ALEX HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO CLOSE IN YET!!
BUT IT'S SINK-ING!!
IN THAT CASE, THE NEXT BALL ...
WILL BE HIGH!!
HA

!!
LOVE - 15
ALL RIGHT!!
That's why I said it's too early to call this game
Ohhhh!? It's totally different from before!!
BUT UNLIKE THE DEUCE COURT, HERE I SHOULD BE MOST WARY OF A WIDE, FLAT SERVE . .
FOR AD COURT, IT'S 60% WIDE, AND 30% CENTER.

THIS IS REALLY POWERFUL!!
DAH
Good return!!
But it's weak!!
FOR FOREHAND WINNERS, HE PREFERS GOING CROSSCOURT.
I HAVE TO GET BACK WITH ALL MY MIGHT!!

DOWN THE LINE?!
Aww, too bad
No that error was pretty much forced by Maruo
Out!!
LOVE - 30
THA... THANK GOOD-NESS!!


I'LL DEFINITELY WIN...
AND SEE WHAT LIES BEYOND!!
Campus
BUT... I'M SURE I'LL BE ABLE TO FILL THIS GAP WITH ALL THE THINGS I'VE ANALYZED
I'M NO MATCH IN TERMS OF TECHNIQUE, POWER OR EXPERIENCE.
...CURRENTLY, ALEX IS DEFINITELY A STEP BETTER THAN ME

15 – 30
RGH

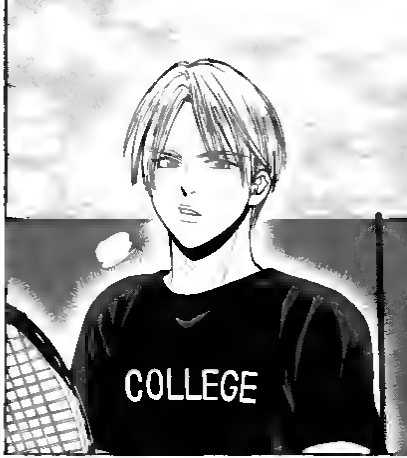
30 – 30

First set first game.

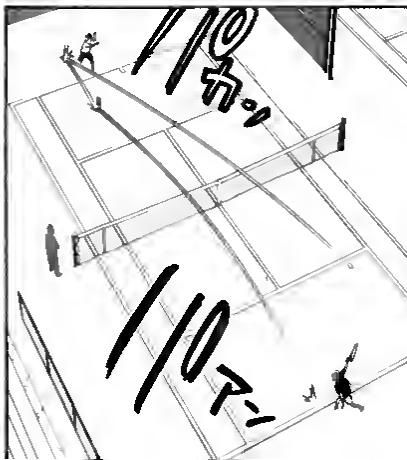
Taking advantage of Alex's unstable start,

30 – 40

Eiichiro succeeds in breaking



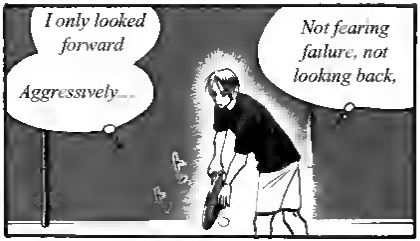
Game, Maruo. 1 – 0

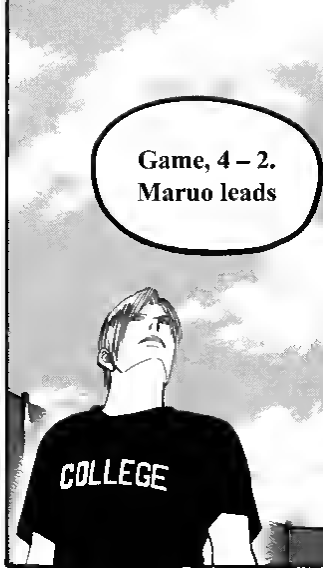


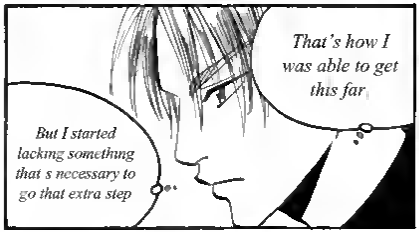
AVOIDING HIS STRONG FOREHAND AND FOCUSING ON ATTACKING HIS BACKHAND IS DEFINITELY WORKING.
2 — 0
AFTER THAT, ANOTHER BREAK... DIDN'T QUITE HAPPEN,
BUT WITH TACTICS DERIVED FROM ALEX'S DATA, MARUO SUCCESS-FULLY HOLDS HIS SERVICE GAME.
2 — 1
3 — 1
THE MATCH SURPRISINGLY PROCEEDS WITH EIICHIRO'S ONE BREAK LEAD.
3 — 2
Not only are my serves getting returned more than I expected
but it's hard to go for an attack with my forehand
He's quite accurately reading my intentions of gaining the advantage with the serve and finishing with the forehand

Is this… the fruit of his study?
カキ
カキ
カキ
カキ
カキ
Shit… 4-5 on the second set!! There!!
If I hadn't made that stupid mistake, I definitely would've turned it around!!
Game, set, match. Won by Terry.
Count: 7 – 5, 6 – 4
Am I… stressing too much on winning after becoming a pro…..?

No matter how much you think about it after losing, you can't change the outcome
D…dad
No matter how much you regret it, you can't get back to that 4 – 5 game in the second set
I know…. that
Then just forget about it.
You kept on going without hesitation, right?
Then there's nothing to regret about that past
Don't turn back. Believe in yourself and keep on moving forward


I only looked forward
Aggressively...
Not fearing failure, not looking back,


Game, 4 – 2.
Maruo leads
COLLEGE


That's how I was able to get this far
But I started lacking something that s necessary to go that extra step

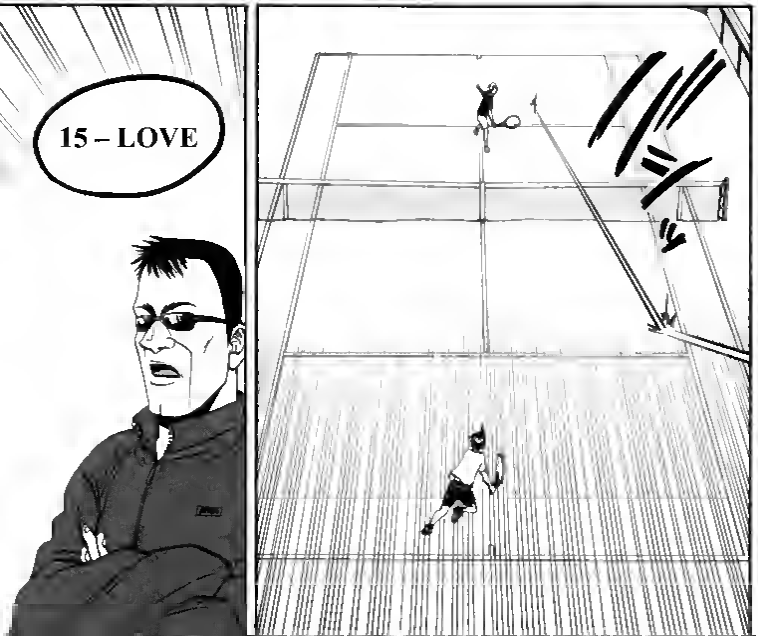
Even if you can't change the past, maybe it's worth looking back if there's something big enough to change the future
Maybe there are pasts that should be forgotten and pasts that should be accepted

Two weeks ago, Maruo was no match for me
But now, by thoroughly reflecting upon his past, he's gotten in the lead

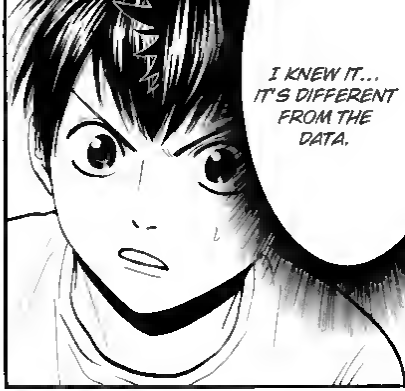
Fault!
IT'S A TOTALLY DIFFERENT SERVICE PATTERN FROM BEFORE.
A WIDE FLAT ON A DEUCE COURT?!
HA
COLLEGE

A SLICE TO THE CENTER?!
THIS IS A FIRST TOO!!
RGH
BACK-HAND SLICE!!
EVEN THOUGH HE'S BEEN ACTIVELY SWITCHING TO THE FOREHAND OR HITTING WITH TOPSPIN UNTIL NOW?!
!?
COLLEGE

ビシッ
RGH
は？
SHOOT!!

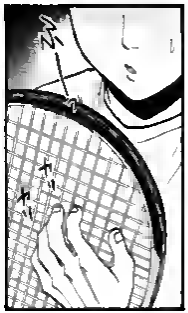

15 – LOVE

I know very well what's written on those notes.
Even though I never looked back, it's still my own past


I KNEW IT... IT'S DIFFERENT FROM THE DATA.

If you thought you learned everything about me in just two weeks,
you couldn't be more wrong.

ATHLETICS



Baby Steps

Although I couldn't write much about it 'cause they've been playing tennis the whole time, remember that they also had some free time

# Baby Steps ⑨ Extra

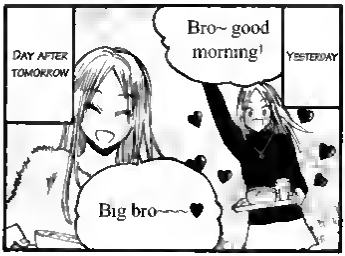
Hello, this is Katsuki.
Thank you so much for buying volume 9.

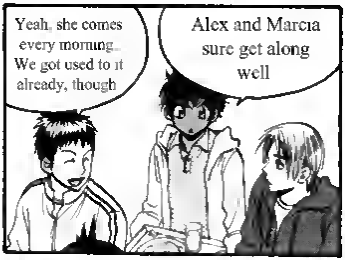
It was an America arc.
Since all Ei-chan does is play tennis every day, the content was also tennis-only.
The America arc will go on for a bit more.

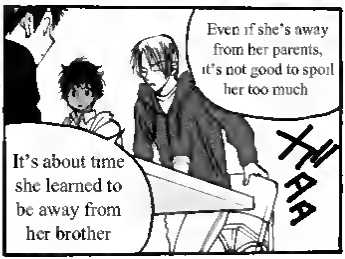
Ei-chan keeps on getting better and better, so I want to get better too, but thanks to all the work, I haven't been able to play tennis at all, and my fitness is currently worse...
Ahhhhhhh...
But it's fortunate that I'm still healthy.

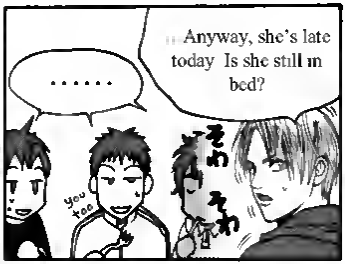
Well then, see you next volume!

## SIBLINGS





Even if she's away from her parents, it's not good to spoil her too much
It's about time she learned to be away from her brother
ハハハ



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